Existentially-self-deceptive-storytelling: a new genre

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Existentially-Self-Deceptive-Storytelling:
A New Genre

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Abstract

This thesis is an exploration into the function and form of storytelling. Its initial assumption is that consciousness is a genetically transmitted mechanism which generates a concept of self by creating a story. In this formulation, the consciousness is called narrative-consciousness. Since the concept of self necessarily suggests its opposite and this in turn involves awareness of existential futility, the purpose of the story, generated by the narrative-consciousness, is seen to be, in the first instance, the hiding of this unavoidable and potentially damaging awareness. This thesis suggests that to achieve this goal the story must be based on the process of self-deception.

The thesis shows that, in general, self-deception involves three significant components in its bid to separate *any* two paradoxical ideas: unease, process and hiding and that each of these maps onto a particular component in the final narrative of the self. The narrative created by a consciousness hiding, in particular, the awareness of existential angst is given the specific name existentially-self-deceptive-story, with an acronym ESDeS.

The thesis goes on to suggest that such a narrative-consciousness could produce written stories that follow the same pattern, in which case the stories are called existentially-self-deceptive-novels, with an acronym ESDeN.

Such a story or genre is then shown to be part of a continuum consisting of up to three distinct ways of dealing with existential futility. The thesis labels these Story-1, Story-2 and Story-3 respectively but reserves the name ESDeN for a sub-set of Story-2.

Analyses of three of these stories, *Heart of Darkness, Chance* and *Thinks* concludes that the genre necessarily includes genre-markers, bracketing deaths and repetition, can also include other optional components such as the self-deceptive process or the parent-child mechanism but that its defining characteristic is its division between an overt plot and a covert plot which contains a collusive death of a character identified with existential angst.

A covert plot is necessarily available but it is, by definition, not easily discovered. Its successful hiding is made possible, primarily, by foregrounding the overt content of the novel at the expense of the covert. In this sense, the only necessary requirement of the overt content is it should distract and it does this best when the reader cooperates by investing time in interpretation: that is, in order to disguise the ultimate the reader concentrates on the proximal.

Finally, the thesis mirrors the endings of each ESDeN by drawing attention to the fact that this collusion will not work for long: just as self-deception cannot withstand too much contrary evidence, the covert plot will not stand too many re-readings. Inevitably, for the true ESDeS, another point of recognition will occur and this will necessitate the renewal or replacement of the ESDeS.

Contents

Introduction

Telling, writing, listening to and reading stories are ubiquitous human activities. This is not an original observation. Mark Currie says that if we, as a species, were called "*homo fabulans*"[1] it would not be over-stating the case. Jonathan Culler and David Lodge both suggest that, in essence, the activity is in-built: Culler uses the term drive - "there is a basic human drive to hear and tell stories"[2] - and Lodge uses the term instinct: "the storytelling instinct…seems to be part of all human cultures."[3] Daniel Dennett also agrees. He says, more poetically, "just as spiders don't have to think, consciously and deliberately, about how to spin their webs and just as beavers…do not consciously and deliberately plan the structures they build…we do not consciously and deliberately figure out what narratives to tell and how to tell them".[4] Their choices of words suggest that because storytelling is an in-built function it must have a "survival" function in the sense that it is used by Darwin's theory. This entails, according to Stephen Jay Gould, "the claim that organisms enjoying differential reproductive success will, on average, be those variants that are fortuitously better adapted to changing environments, and that these variants will then pass their favoured traits to offspring by inheritance."[5] This description can, for the purpose of this thesis, be put into shorthand: "We are

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1 Mark Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory,* Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998, p. 2.
2 Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 83.
3 David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel,* London: Secker and Warburg, 2003, p. 41.
4 Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained,* London: Penguin, 1993, p. 418.
5 Stephen Jay Gould, *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002, p.13.

survival machines"[6] and, if we all share a particular attribute, it is at least likely that it is there to ensure our survival. Common examples, in other species, are the tail of the peacock and anting. Both at first glance would appear to be not only not useful but definitely useless: "the tail of the peacock is a *jeu d'esprit par excellence*"[7] - but the Darwinian still wants to ask why: "We don't marvel at a creature doggedly grubbing in the earth….but if it interrupts its digging by doing a somersault we want to ask why."[8] So, if the claim that storytelling is "basic" is to be acceptable, in the sense of being required for survival, there is an obligation to provide some sort of an explanatory narrative to identify its function in terms of evolution and, once this is done, to suggest how the storytelling might achieve this end: "what precisely is this species-typical or universal structure, and what bearing does it have on literary representation?"[9]

Robert Park suggests that there is a way forward because evolution opens "up a way of thinking"[10] about behaviour and so the nature of the explanation to be given can be in the form of an explanatory "something" not in terms of a biological mechanism. Frederick Crew adopts the same approach and calls it "a Darwinian Outlook that can generate fruitful new questions".[11] This outlook is adopted by

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6 Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. x.

7 Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, London: Bantam Press, 2006, p. 163.

8 Brian Boyd, "Evolutionary Theories of Art", in Jonathan Gottschall and David Sloan Wilson (eds), *The Literary Animal: Evolution and the Nature of Narrative*, Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2005, p. 147.

9 Joseph Carroll, *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature and Literature,* London: Routledge, 2004, p. 123.

10 Robert L. Park, *Superstition: Belief in the Age of Science,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 25.

11 Frederick Crews, "Foreword", to Gottschall and Wilson (eds), *The Literary Animal*, p. xiii.

many including Brian Boyd and Dawkins. Boyd argues that "evolution must be part of any complete account of the human, including human art".[12] Dawkins uses the same argument in a negative sort of way. He points out why storytelling should not be ubiquitous: "If a wild animal habitually performs some useless activity, natural selection will favour rival individuals who devote the time and energy, instead, to surviving and reproducing."[13] Of course it is one thing to claim something has an evolutionary origin but another to give a convincing explanation of why this should be so. Boyd, in his review article "Evolutionary Theories of Art", suggests that all such explanations can be grouped under the headings "by-product", "sexual selection" and "adaptation".[14] Robert Trivers explains that these explanations are often conveniently couched in metaphorical language: "I choose language of strategy and decision, as if each individual contemplated in strategic terms the decisions it ought to make at each instant in order to maximize its reproductive success".[15]

Full blown storytelling should, therefore, be regarded as wasteful in the Darwinian sense unless it is possible to find a scenario that makes sense for survival. Several authorities have suggested an adaptive approach. Lodge argues that "evolutionary psychologists have suggested that the ability to imagine what another person – an enemy for instance – might be thinking in a given situation, by running hypothetical scenarios on the brain's hardware, was a crucial survival skill

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12 Boyd, "Evolutionary Theories of Art", p. 147.
13 Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p. 163.
14 Boyd, "Evolutionary Theories of Art", p. 147 et seq.
15 Robert L. Trivers, "Parental Investment and Sexual Selection", in Bernard G. Campbell (ed.), *Sexual Selection and the Descent of Man*, New Brunswick: Aldine, 2006, p. 146.

for primitive man."[16] Susan Blackmore adds: "Individuals who could best predict the actions of others would be at an advantage."[17] Steven Pinker is regarded by Carroll as nothing better than an "undergraduate",[18] but his work is treated seriously by Boyd who recognises that although Pinker sees art in general as "not an adaptation but an evolutionary by-product" he sees an adaptive purpose for narrative. Carroll sums up Pinker's discussion on the subject as "narrative may serve an adaptive function in enabling us to develop behaviours to test possible courses of action and their consequences without risking real-world harm".[19] These skills undoubtedly contribute to the storytelling process but they are not, in themselves, full-blown storytelling. They might be necessary for evolutionary survival but there must be something more to have justified a further development into full-blown storytelling. As Boyd argues: "why do we not simply design schematic scenarios, and imagine consequences?"[20]

In fact, it is my contention that there are two somethings more. The first "something" is that the individual possesses a consciousness - which is taken here to imply only a specific brain process - which has a function to organise sensory data in the form of a story. The second "something" is that making sense, in general, and self-deception, in particular, is a necessary part of how the organisation is achieved. This will imply that the consciousness can be described as a **narrative-**

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16 Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel,* p. 41.

17 Susan Blackmore, *Consciousness: A Very Short Introduction,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 126.

18 Carroll, *Literary Darwinism,* p. 64.

19 Ibid., p. 123, with reference to Steven Pinker, *How the Mind Works*, New York: Norton, 1997, p. 539-542.

20 Boyd, "Evolutionary Theories of Art", fn. 25, p. 173.

consciousness.[21] Collectively, these modifications produce what will be called an **existentially-self-deceptive-storytelling** if the self-deception involves the accommodation of the awareness of existential futility. The storytelling will result in an **existentially-self-deceptive-story** related by an **existentially-self-deceptive-storyteller** (all three to be given the acronym ESDeS for convenience). In this scenario, the ESDeS function can be seen as having three evolutionary justifications. It might be just regarded, at first sight, as the by-product consequences of other more immediately recognisable biological necessities: that is, in itself it is not "'for' anything".[22] However, once present, it becomes adaptive in the sense that it aids social cohesion through a process to be called **collusion.** Finally, however, this thesis wants to make a stronger claim: ESDeS actually provides us, as organisms, with the justification and means to **survive**. In order to achieve this end the story has to be told in a way that achieves the desired accommodation of the awareness of existential futility.

The Narrative–Consciousness Theory

Consciousness, like the mechanisms involved in the process of evolution, is the subject of many theories[23] yet, as Blackmore points out, "no one yet agrees which

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[21] Some of the words in the text take on a particular meaning for this thesis. When such a word is introduced for the first time it is inserted in bold type and its meaning explained in the "Glossary of Technical Terms".

[22] Jonathan Gottschall and David Sloan Wilson, "Introduction", Gottschall and Wilson (eds), *The Literary Animal*, p. xiii.

[23] See, for example, David Armstrong, *A Materialist Theory of the Mind*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968.

[theory] is right nor – more importantly – has any idea how to find out".[24] I subscribe to Blackmore's view that consciousness "is intrinsic to complex brain processes and inseparable from them".[25] She goes on to suggest that, if this view is taken, there is no use asking the specific question why consciousness evolved, for consciousness "is not separable from intelligence, perception, thinking, self-concept, language, or any other evolved abilities".[26] However, it is still possible to ask, given that consciousness did come into being, whether or not it might have any adaptive functions of its own in addition to those of its clearly adaptive companions. A first attribute is that it reports experiences. David Hume, famously, described how he stared into his own consciousness looking for "what I call *myself*". He argues: "I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I can never catch *myself*, and may truly be said not to exist."[27] But even this is not as simple as it might first appear. Blackmore asks her students, in effect, to repeat Hume's experiment and reports that, with practice, it becomes "clear that there are always lots of threads going on at once, and none is really 'in' consciousness until it is grasped".[28]

Herbert Fingarette, looking at problems associated with self-deception, came up with a similar change in emphasis. He specifically moves to an active model of mind in which people are doers, active rather than passive: "To be specific the

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24 Blackmore, *Consciousness*, p. 126.
25 Ibid., p. 9.
26 Ibid., p.126.
27 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, London: Penguin Classics, 1985, p. 300.
28 Blackmore, *Consciousness*, p. 48.

model I propose is that of a skill."[29] He develops his argument at great length with respect to self-deception, along the lines of "we must see consciousness as the further exercise of a specific skill": a skill to which he assigns the name, "spelling-out". I am happier with this formulation for it does not imply the pre-existence of something other than the experience and therefore agrees with Hume's "we do not exist". In this spirit, Blackmore's experimental report can be rephrased as, there is nothing in consciousness until it is spelled-out. In this sense spelling-out brings the consciousness into existence. Blackmore avoids difficulties with the dualist concept of "we" introduced into Fingarette's description by giving the spelling-out function to language: "Our language spins the story of a self and so we come to believe that there is, in addition to our single body, a single inner self who has consciousness, holds opinions, and makes decisions."[30] The record of the experiences becomes organised in its reporting: "grasped", "spelled-out" and fashioned into a "story". For convenience I will call this formulation of consciousness the narrative-consciousness model**.** The idea that the self is generated by a story and has no meaning beyond its story gives substance to Currie's assertion that the "only way to explain who we are is to tell our own story, to select key events which characterise us and organise them according to the formal principals of narrative – to externalise ourselves as if talking of someone else, and for the purposes of self representation."[31] As it stands, however, Currie's formulation gives a mixed message. It seems to say a "we" is necessary to create the story of "we". It is more consistent to omit the first "we": the story comes first and the "we" comes after.

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29 Herbert Fingarette, *Self Deception,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960, p.38.
30 Blackmore, *Consciousness*, p.81.
31 Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory,* p. 17.

But in fact even this is too big a claim. Just as the organising of experiences *is* consciousness, the story *is* "we". A sentence like "Joseph Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*" no longer makes sense. As Blackmore puts it, "there are experiences but there is no one who is having them".[32] There is no Joseph Conrad telling a story, there is just the story. For convenience the story can be identified with a name, Joseph Conrad, and so, in this sense, it is permissible to argue that Marlow within the story *is* part of Conrad. Lodge puts forward, essentially, the same claim as Currie. But he, like Blackmore, assigns the telling to language rather than a pre-existing self: "the 'single human voice' telling its own story, can seem the only authentic way of rendering consciousness."[33]

The Existentially-Self-Deceptive-Narrative-Consciousness Theory.

Consciousness, then, is no more than a particular brain function. Its function is to organise continuous and disparate data and to project it outwards by means of a story. If this is all that it does - and there is no independent evidence of its existence - then it is in effect synonymous with the story. If it has other functions then the part that *is* the story is called the narrative-consciousness and it is this part only that concerns this thesis.

However, not just any story can be written. It has to be a story that is written in a way that makes sense. Jonathan Culler argues: "Man is not just *homo*

[32] Blackmore, *Consciousness*, p. 75.
[33] David Lodge, "Sense and Sensibility", *Guardian*, Features and Review Section, Saturday, November 2, 2002. p. 6.

sapiens but *homo significans*: a creature who gives significance to things."[34] This view is repeated so often - by for example Cedric Watts: "man has been called *homo significans* – man the meaning maker"[35] - that it has become a truism. However, it is soundly based on experimental evidence. A seminal example is provided by F. C. Bartlett. He gave a folk tale called *The War of the Ghosts* to a group of British subjects. It tells of a young man who was drawn into a war party of ghosts. A part of it is presented below:

> So the canoes went back to Egulac, and the young man went ashore to his house, and made a fire. And he told everybody and said: "Behold I accompanied the ghosts, and we went to fight. Many of our fellows were killed, and many of those who attacked us were killed. They said I was hit, and I did not feel sick".[36]

Bartlett then asked the subjects to retell the folk tale and one reproduction came out, for example, as follows:

> In the evening he returned to his hut, and told his friends that he had been in a battle. A great many had been slain, and he had been wounded by an arrow; he had not felt any pain, he said…[37]

As Herbert and Eve Clark point out: The subjects have "made a great many errors."[38] They have undoubtedly changed the original and the way that they have done so demonstrates the way the narrative-consciousness works. It takes the given text, which seems meaningless to the individual subject, and transforms it into one

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[34] Jonathan Culler, *Structural Poetics,* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975, p. 264.
[35] Cedric Watts, *The Deceptive Text: An Introduction to Covert Plots*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984, p. 5.
[36] Frederic C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1932, p. 65.
[37] Ibid., p. 72.
[38] Herbert H. Clark and Eve V. Clark, *Psychology and Language*: *An Introduction to Psycholinguistics*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1977, p. 168.

which does have meaning by bringing the events more into line with more familiar, and presumably learnt, customs and beliefs.

The notion of narrative-consciousness is thus expanded and can now be described as a brain process that organises experience using a principle of "making sense" where the name given to the experiences once organised is story. The story is related to others using the medium of spoken language or written text. As told so far, evolution would still not accept even this development for it does not yet appear to allocate selective advantage. As it stands, storytelling still appears to waste time which might be better used for reproduction. For this thesis to be, at least, internally consistent it is necessary to produce something which is genuinely adaptive on to which storytelling can be grafted.

Again this expanded idea of a narrative-consciousness is not new. It is implied in numerous written texts. Roquentin, the hero of Sartre's *Nausea* (1938), essentially reiterates this claim: that at least part of consciousness makes sense of who we are by writing a story. He argues:

> For the most banal event to become an adventure, all one must do is start telling about it.…That is what deceives people; a man is always a teller of stories, he lives surrounded by his stories, he sees everything that happens to him through these stories; he tries to live his own life as if it were a story he was telling.[39]

Mark Currie illustrates what this might mean, beyond a character merely expressing a view, with his long analysis of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. It culminates with the view that "identity is only identity when narration is in

[39] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, London: Penguin, 1965, p. 56.

process, [this is synonymous with Blackmore's "grasped" and Fingarette's "spelled-out"] so that there is a sense in which Jekyll has no existence beyond the end of the writing: his fictionality ensures he has no existence after writing has stopped."[40] Leigh Wilson makes the same point with reference to the relationship between May and Marcher in James's "The Beast in the Jungle". She argues: "The story is constructed entirely around their relationship, when one of them disappears the narrative cannot be sustained."[41] This thesis needs to argue for the opposite view: that the death of one character will be shown to represent the death of the awareness of existential futility and, as such, permits the story, in an existential sense, to go on in the person of the survivor: May's (unspoken) secret is the knowledge of existential futility and Marcher does not want to know this. "All the rest" as Camus states, "comes afterwards."[42] Any interpretation, such as "romance should have been the cure",[43] for example, remains as valid as any other for it will do the job of disguising the hiding of existential futility.

To make this jump, it is necessary to push the theoretical scenario a little further and to add the second correlate of consciousness. Summing up so far, it has been established that consciousness, as claimed by Blackmore, exists only because it comes into being along with perception, memory, intelligence and language. This thesis has argued that it might have a more specifically evolutionary function if it included two additional somethings. The first of these seems plausible: the

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40 Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, p. 124.

41 Leigh Wilson, "'It was as if she had said…': May Sinclair and Reading Narratives of Cure", unpublished PhD thesis, University of Westminster, 2000, p.21.

42 Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, London: Penguin, 1975, p. 11.

43 Wilson, "'It was as if she had said…': May Sinclair and Reading Narratives of Cure", p.21.

consciousness has, at least, a narrative function to make sense of who "we" are. Now suppose, if by the very nature of what it means to be conscious, consciousness necessarily entails making available the asking of the (human) question "why?" This would be, in effect, merely a particular application of the process "making sense". The fact that the question is asked is an empirical fact. Many people arrive at a point of awareness that needs this question. When Tolstoy became aware that "the truth is death" and, in that awareness, realised that "life had lost its charm" he says: "It was all quite dreadful. And so, in order to escape from this horror, I wanted to kill myself."[44] John Stuart Mill, also, had the same experience. He "sought relief [in vain] from [his] favourite books…from which [he] had always hitherto drawn strength".[45] If the question, then, is re-phrased in a Darwinian framework it becomes "Why should I survive?" and, in this form, apart from the instinctual, "because I want to", there is no answer in favour. There are, however, lots of possible answers against. The most obvious and immediate one is "There is no reason for I will die anyway." A more sophisticated one is "I am a contingent being: I am here but need not have been." And if there is, in these senses, no point to an existence then there will be no point in passing on "favoured traits to offspring by inheritance" for the same reason. And if there is no point to the next generation then making it does not, in itself, give a point to this generation. It is a question, given the gross overcrowding of the world, the imminence of a global warming catastrophe and the exhaustion of natural reserves, that needs answering in a more positive way. In the event of there being no reason, at least as far as the planet is

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[44] Leo Tolstoy, "A Confession", in *A Confession and Other Religious Writings,* trans. Jane Kentish, London: Penguin Classics, 1987, p. 33.

[45] John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, New York: Signet Classics, 1964, p. 109.

concerned, it would be better if the human race dies off before it kills everything else. Francis Crick is another authority who accepts the general power of evolutionary explanation but his answer to a question from Dawkins might fill a sensitive person with despair: "Well I don't think we're for anything. We're just products of evolution. You can say, 'Gee, your life must be pretty bleak if you don't think there is a purpose.' But I'm anticipating having a good lunch."[46] He seems, to me, to make the point he is trying to avoid.

The human mechanism far from just "having a good lunch" is actually faced with existential futility and will need to incorporate, within the story that *is* its narrative-consciousness, the paradoxical fact that life is without necessity but goes on. The mechanism will, therefore, need to generate not just any story, nor a story that makes sense in general, but a story to avoid this recognition in order to facilitate or to make sense of living. Camus notes that "judging whether or not life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy". He continues: "I see many people die because they judge that life is not worth living."[47] It has to be admitted, however, that such a course of action has not been generally followed. Faced with the "fundamental question of philosophy", people have generally made the pro-life choice. In order to provide an explanation to resolve the paradox it is necessary to postulate that, along with the awareness of existential futility, another attribute must have been available at the same time to mitigate its potential damage. If it is supposed that a situation pertained at one time in which

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46 Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p. 100.

47 Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, p. 11.

one group - who inclined to non-functioning through despair or even actual suicide - existed side-by-side with another group who possessed this additional attribute which biased behaviour towards the opposite inclination, then the latter group would clearly be the more adaptive.

Such an attribute did already exist. In fact, it existed long before the development of consciousness as it is generally understood and, since it did exist, it could have been adopted for the function of denying existential futility. This attribute, or skill (to use Fingarette's terminology), is the power to deceive which, in certain circumstances, develops into self-deception. If self-deception were able to hide existential angst and facilitate the creation of an alternate *project* then it is clear that self-deceivers would prove adaptive. If so, then the skill should exhibit the hallmark of evolution by being ubiquitous and, again, this seems to have been empirically identified. Trivers, for one, claims that "a wealth of studies in social psychology have demonstrated the ubiquity and variety of self-deception".[48] Kenneth Harris thinks that Nathaniel Hawthorne provides an example of the literary adoption of this same view for he notes that: "the very ubiquity of self-deception in [Hawthorne's] fiction would suggest that he tended to regard it with some sympathy as a common human failing."[49]

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[48] Robert Trivers, "foreword" to J. S. Lockard and D. L. Paulhus (eds), *Self-Deception – An Adaptive Mechanism,* Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988, p. vii.

[49] Kenneth Marc Harris, *Hypocrisy and Self-Deception in Hawthorne's Fiction,* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988, p. 68.

The evidence for the prior existence of deception is provided by a whole range of biologists and socio-biologists and Joan S. Lockard sums up the scientific consensus in her review article, "Origins of Self-Deception". She starts her article with the summary: "Many animals have evolved a form of deception that is beneficial to their survival."[50] She then goes on to enumerate many examples and notes that "deception is prevalent not only among members of different species, but also among animals of the same species",[51] again giving numerous examples. Lockard has also noted that many socio-biologists "have regarded self-deception…as a logical extension of the deception model in animal behaviour."[52] When they use self in this context they are suggesting that "in their view, one major distinction between deception and self-deception, as the terms imply, is a matter of whether the masquerade is perpetrated by another or by oneself".[53] Clearly this depends on the meaning assigned to self. Dawkins, Hume, Blackmore and this thesis essentially deny the existence of a "we" and regard the human animal as simply a "machine" that provides, in addition, a narrative account of what it is doing. Allowing this mechanistic interpretation of self enables Robert Trivers to argue:

> If … deceit is fundamental to animal communication, then there must be strong selection to spot deception and this ought, in turn, to select for a degree of self-deception, rendering some facts and motives unconscious so as not to betray - by subtle signs of self-knowledge – the deception being practiced. Thus, the conventional view that natural selection favors nervous

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50 Joan S. Lockard, "Origins of Self-Deception", in Lockard and Paulhus (eds), *Self-Deception – An Adaptive Mechanism,* p. 14.

51 Ibid., p.14.

52 Joan S. Lockard, "Evolution, Ontogeny, and Society", in Lockard and Paulhus (eds), *Self-Deception – An Adaptive Mechanism,* p. 8.

53 Ibid., p. 8.

> systems which produce ever more accurate images of the world must be a very naïve view of mental progress.[54]

Lockard explains what "not to betray" means: she says "if he [the male of a monogamous species] is deceived regarding his own motives, his behaviour might be even more convincing".[55] The behaviour referred to here contrasts overt behaviour with covert signs indicated by, for example, the autonomous nervous system as is the case in the Gur and Sackeim experiment [56] discussed in more detail in chapter 1. This approach avoids the need for the invention of a human reflective self. She goes on to explain what "convincing" might mean: "Weaknesses and emotions that could interfere with the successful execution of a lie might be rendered impotent by relegating them to the unconscious."[57] The socio-biologists, then, have definitely identified the fact that deception of others already existed in animal behaviour before human evolution and seem prepared to go further by claiming some animals can deceive themselves. Trivers is able to spell out, specifically, the immediate and direct reproductive benefits of self-deception in his "Parental Investment and Sexual Selection" which concerns itself with partnerships in monogamous, avian, relationships. He points out that the relationship is asymmetric: "a copulation costing the male virtually nothing may trigger…an investment by the female that is not trivial",[58] involving as it does the development of an egg and a lengthy gestational process. Trivers then suggests that the male

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54 Richard L. Trivers, "Introduction" to Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, p. vi.

55 Lockard, "Origins of Self-Deception", p. 16.

56 R. C. Gur and H. A. Sackeim, "Self-deception: A concept in search of a phenomenon", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 1979, 147-169.

57 Lockard, "Evolution, Ontogeny, and Society", p. 10.

58 Trivers, "Parental Investment and Sexual Selection", p. 145.

"may maximise his chances of leaving surviving offspring by copulating with and abandoning many females".[59] But, as Lockard points out, this is only likely to be successful if he convinces his partner to bring total commitment to the rearing of the off-spring and he is more likely to achieve this if he convinces the "females of his own fidelity";[60] that is, he fools his partner and, as has already been pointed out, he is able to do this better if he fools himself first. Lockard does not say so but it is also likely that the female does her childrearing better and is therefore more successful if she is also deceived. In fact, even if she sees through the male's self-deception it is in her interest to allow it. As with the male, her allowing it works better if she deceives herself that the male is loyal. This is not the end of the story however for the deserted partner will achieve more success if "it can induce another partner to help to raise its young".[61] This in turn "requires deceiving another organism into doing something contrary to its own interests, and adaptations should evolve to guard individuals against such tasks".[62] Clearly once again the process works only if the initiator of the deception is self-deceived. Self-deception at its very inception may be seen to be necessarily a "common" and a collusive process: avoiding of uncomfortable facts has a demonstrable shared purpose. Although the use of self in this way may not appeal to everyone - so when used in this way will be now be encased in brackets – it nevertheless allows the probability that once humans evolve what is more usually called self this deception can transform into what is more commonly called self-deception. Paulhus certainly takes this view.

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59 Ibid.
60 Lockard, "Origins of Self-Deception", p. 16.
61 Trivers, "Parental Investment and Sexual Selection", p. 147.
62 Ibid.

He supports Lockard's and Trivers's contention that the consensus of animal literature is in favour of (self)-deception and goes on to say that "the evidence for self-deception in lower organisms [at least] implies an evolutionary basis for human self-deception".[63]

However, even here, a problem arises. A close study of self-deception in humans has led Mary Haight to conclude that it cannot actually exist. She comes to this conclusion because she adopts a mentalist model of mind which Herbert Fingarette and this thesis try to avoid. However, she does provide a very cogent definition which provides a useful starting point and introduces the propositional terminology **p** and **not-p**. Haight's definition says:

> If A deceives B, then for some proposition(s) p, A knows that p; and either A keeps or helps to keep B from knowing that p, or A helps to make B believe that not-p, or both.[64]

For the purpose of this thesis, her shorter version will suffice. She describes the essence of self-deception as "when A deceives B, A – to deceive – must know that p, when B – when deceived - must not".[65] For self-deception, A and B must be the same and therefore to believe not-p and p at the same time "seems impossible".[66]

However, the narrative-consciousness model is able to overcome both the self problem and the self-deception problem. The idea of self has been replaced by

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63 D. L. Paulhus, "General Introduction", in Lockard and Paulhus (eds), *Self-Deception – An Adaptive Mechanism,* p. 2.

64 Mary Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980, p. 9.

65 Ibid., p. 9.

66 Ibid.

the story which is either generated by the narrative-consciousness (weak theory) or *is* the narrative-consciousness (strong theory). The self in self-deception now means the story and it is easily possible for a story to contain both p and not-p. If the selective advantage of self-deception in perpetuating the genetic structure of the organism is the ultimate reason for its evolution, then these propositions take on two additional but separate tasks in the human sphere. One of them can refer to any two contradictory propositions and the other can refer to the specifically existential opposition where not-p will stand for the proposition that "life is not worth living" and p will stand for its opposite, "life is worth living". Hickey, for example, in *The Iceman Cometh* (1939), behaves very like Trivers's "monogamous male" and gives substance to the meaning of self-deception. He spends the play, unknown to his audience, fooling his wife who, in turn, refuses to accept the lies he gives to her and to himself. But equally it is easy to see that the variety of self-deception may be greater. In addition to Hickey, who has to cope with his unhappy marriage, Orgon in *Tartuffe* (1669) may be embarrassed, Arsinoe in *The Misanthrope* (1666) may be in love, Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter*(1850) has his religion to contend with, Hjalmar Ekdal in *The Wild Duck* (1884) has to accommodate knowledge of his wife's infidelity and many others.[67] None of these are of concern to a thesis on ESDeS. They are examples of what I will call normal-self-deceptions. Each is concerned with a life-style choice which is optional. They are not my concern except insofar as they throw light on to the behavioural correlates of all self-deceptions. What is of interest is when the self-deception concerns knowledge of existential futility: awareness that we are contingent beings who will die. Here,

[67] See for example the "pipedreams" of all the other characters in the *The Iceman Cometh.*

since the consequences of this knowledge may be extreme, the adoption of self-deception may be described as necessary. Eagle has noted that a number of writers have speculated as to this particular motivation. Some, he says, "have argued that in certain core areas [e.g. death] denial and related mechanisms are necessary in order for one to live a normal and healthy life".[68] Terry Eagleton puts the same point more poetically: "Amnesia not remembrance is what is natural to us."[69] Eagle goes on to suggest why: "When awareness and insight about oneself lead mainly to despair, panic and a sense of helplessness, self-deception would seem a more adaptive alternative."[70] Eagleton suggests an exploration into the mechanism of self-deception as a means of "denial" would be in order: "[Theory] needs to chance its arm, break out of rather stifling orthodoxy and explore new topics."[71] One of the topics he has in mind is, like Eagle, death for he asserts: "Nothing more graphically illustrates how unnecessary we are than our own mortality."[72]

This thesis, then, has moved on again. It now states that, since self-deception has been adopted for a specific purpose - the denial of existential futility - it deserves a specific name: **existential self-deception** (ESD). ESD, then, provides, with the assistance of the language attribute, a story to disguise the knowledge that life has no necessary meaning (not-p). In this sense the narrative-consciousness theory has become the **existentially-self-deceptive-narrative-consciousness**

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68 Morris Eagle, "Psychoanalysis and Self-Deception", in Lockard and Paulhus (eds), *Self-Deception – An Adaptive Mechanism,* p. 92.
69 Terry Eagleton, *After Theory,* London: Penguin, 2004, p. 63.
70 Eagle, "Psychoanalysis and Self-Deception", p. 93.
71 Eagleton, *After Theory*, p. 222.
72 Ibid., p. 210.

theory and its story, as has been signposted, will be called existentially-self-deceptive-story (ESDeS). It is this story which is **available**; not the self.

Finally, however, as has been shown above, the listening community can often taint the evidence. A scientific study requires repeatability so a written text makes the same version available: permanently in the same state for alternative examinations. It will be the case that two readers will not necessarily agree what the text means but at least there can now be dispute about the actual words. The text will be equally and unchangingly available for each new reader. Mary Haight, in her study of self-deception, sees this as a problem albeit a necessary one: "The dangers of such sources [literature] are clear and I do not forget them. But they are the sources we have, and a good deal more than nothing."[73] Indeed it is a great deal more than nothing: this thesis now sees the story of the self, whether told or written, as the way to deal with both the problems of self, self-deception and existential angst.

When an ESDeS is mimicked in such a novelistic, repeatable framework it will be given the name **existentially-self-deceptive-novel** (ESDeN). Such a narrative will be found to have divided into two. There will be a **covert plot** that mimics the storing of existential angst and an **overt plot** which mimics the hiding of the covert plot by foregrounding some alternative. The narrative-consciousness that is the reader then will be able to collude with the task of finding out the significance of the overt plot and is able, then, to overlook the covert plot. Such a search or

[73] Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception*, p. 74.

quest motivates a whole range of stories not least of which is *Heart of Darkness* (1899), the analysis of which provides the backbone of this thesis.

I will use chapter 1 to generate the theory of the ESDeS, defining all the most important terms, and chapter 2 to limit its provenance. The theory will then be illustrated in great detail, in chapter 3, with examples of non-ESDeS and chapter 4, with *Heart of Darkness*. Chapter 5 and chapter 6 will be used to further develop the idea with the extension of Marlow's *Heart of Darkness* experience into *Chance* (1914) and the analysis of *Thinks* (2002) as a contemporary example of an ESDeN.

Chapter 1

Existentially-Self-Deceptive-Narrative-Consciousness Theory

Mary Haight makes it clear that "a theory of self-deception must (I think) depend on a theory of consciousness",[1] so this thesis has provided one with its narrative-consciousness formulation. This asserts that there is no "we" beyond the story which is related by the organism and so, from now on, the passive voice will be universally adopted: it is confusing to assert that there is no "we" and then to write as if such a "we" existed. David Armstrong comes to almost the same conclusion but describes it slightly differently. He asserts that consciousness is "no more than *awareness* (perception) of inner mental states….an inner state apt for the production of certain behaviour."[2] He means by this that one particular part of the brain scans another as perception scans the environment. This thesis has simply added the suggestion that the "certain behaviour" produced is, in particular, a story based on a self-deceptive process in order to nullify the by-product of existential futility.

However, other theories of mind do exist and it is likely that these will be included in the storytelling process. Armstrong, for one, has, before coming to his own conclusion, stated that "there are many possible ways of classifying theories of mind"[3] but his method, "based upon different conceptions of the relationship of

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1 Mary Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980, p. viii.

2 David Armstrong, *A Materialist Theory of the Mind*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968, p. 94.

3 Ibid., p. 5.

mind to body",[4] is apposite. Simply put it divides the relationship into the three logical possibilities – mentalist (body is reduced to mind), dualist (mind and matter are two different sorts of substance) and materialist (mind is reduced to body). These main categories can then be further divided: dualism can be either Cartesian dualism or bundle dualism and materialism can be either behaviourism or central-state theory. Armstrong rejects the first category out of hand - "most have taken the common view that physical objects are not mental in nature" and he also, along with Blackmore and this thesis, rejects Cartesian dualism, but has some positive things to say about the three remaining categories.[5] This, it is thought, represents the position of most people and so the stories that represent their narrative-consciousnesses will be expected to incorporate aspects of each of these approaches.

Bundle dualism rejects the notion that there are two different substances but does think that mind consists of a succession of non-physical particulars. This originates in David Hume's self-examination, described in the introduction, whose results lead, according to Armstrong, to certain conclusions:

> there are no continuing objects in the mental sphere corresponding to the body in the physical sphere….All that observation of what goes on in our minds reveals is a succession of what Hume calls 'perceptions': that is perceptions, sensations, emotions, thoughts and so on.[6]

These "perceptions" which Hume regards as consciousness might be regarded as non-physical and different from the body. If so, this division invites a further sub-

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[4] Ibid., p. 5.

[5] Armstrong acknowledges, of course, that other models exist: ibid., p. 13, "it may well be possible to find theories of mind which stand on the border-lines of our divisions".

[6] Ibid., p. 7.

classification that "cut[s] across …dualism".[7] Either the consciousness can influence the body (interactionism) or it cannot (parallelism). For T.H. Huxley, for example, consciousness "is thought of as a mere by-product of the operation of the brain";[8] it is a mere epiphenomenon associated with emotional states. This theory, Armstrong asserts, "will have a great appeal to anybody who is sympathetic to materialism, but who still thinks that there is something irreducible about mental states".[9] Behaviourism is more rigidly empirical: it "denies the existence of inner mental states".[10] The movement, which originated with J. B. Watson, is usually associated with, and was strongly advocated by, B. F. Skinner and is also the model which is essentially adopted by Herbert Fingarette. Its main contention is that "to have a mind is merely to behave physically",[11] although "to behave" is sometimes allowed to include "disposition to behave".[12] The final materialist model is the central-state theory. It is strongly adopted by Armstrong and is also essentially that adopted by Haight. A central-state theory, unlike behaviourism, "does not deny the existence of inner mental states".[13] However, what mental states might mean has been a perennial source of dispute. Armstrong argues that they still strongly relate to behaviour: "the concept of mental state is primarily the concept of *a state of the person apt for bringing about a certain behaviour*…it is the cause of behaviour."[14]

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 9.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p. 57.
11 Ibid., p. 10.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., p. 75.
14 Ibid., p. 82.

It is true that most people - that is non-philosophers – are sketchy with respect to details and do not apply appropriate rigour to these different approaches. However, they do use the different forms of language associated with each of the models. It would be expected, therefore, that the self-deceptive process will be found within the novel expressed in three different ways. The section of the thesis that follows suggests that the three ways map onto storytelling to produce three identifiable layers: **genre-markers**, plot process and a narrative structure.

The Genre-marker – Unease: Signposting the Story as an ESDeS

Umberto Eco suggests that a phrase such as "once upon a time" is a genre-indicator and a model reader would take it to mean "a fairy tale is about to start".[15] If an ESD reading is required it too will be signalled by appropriate markers. Ultimately it will be shown that two groups of functionally different markers are needed. The first group consists of **unease** associated with self-deception. The second group consists of a **meaning** marker, a **hiding** marker and a **repetition** marker. This section only looks at the origins of the **self-deceptive-unease** marker: the others will emerge from later discussions.

Unease emerges naturally as soon as the possibility of self-deception enters a story. This is because difficulties are encountered as soon as it becomes necessary to know exactly what the word means. Wittgenstein has already visited this

[15] Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994, p.10.

question when he rhetorically asks, in his *The Blue Book*, "what is the meaning of a word?"[16] He comes to the conclusion that it is not possible to definitely define the meaning of (some) words and would agree that self-deception is such a word. He would also argue that it is still necessary to use the word in the same way that he argues for the use of the word chair: Wittgenstein "expects a negative answer"[17] when he asks the question "are we to say that we do not really attach any meaning to this word [chair], because we are not equipped with rules for every possible application of it?"[18] However, if several uses of the word self-deception are examined and described it turns out not to be possible to find some underlying general characteristic which is present each time the word is used. It might, therefore, be thought that an essential element is missing when it is discovered that every item in each description is non-essential for all self-deceptions or could apply to other behaviours. Haight says something similar of behaviour associated specifically with her analysis of self-deception: "many different ways of thinking may lead to behaviour of this kind."[19] To overcome this problem, Wittgenstein and Saussure independently introduce the idea of "family resemblances". Wittgenstein asserts that "you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that".[20] His advice is "don't think, but look".[21] The suggestion is that a series will form a family of cases; that what is needed is a comparison of cases that all lie at the same level. Saussure deduces

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16 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and The Brown Books,* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969, p. 1.
17 Robert J. Fogelin, *Wittgenstein,* London: Routledge, 1976, p. 135.
18 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1974, #80, p.38.
19 Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception*, p. 73.
20 Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, #66, p. 31.
21 Ibid.

something similar when he refers to the phrase, "my house" and argues that it takes its meaning by comparison: "*my* is associatively related to *you, his, her* etc., while the sign *house* is associatively related to *home, domicile, dwelling, apartment,* etc."[22] It can, therefore, be argued by analogy that to understand the term self-deception it is necessary to appreciate that self-deception gains its meaning not from a list of characteristics but from placing the word in context and using its similarities and differences from other usages to provide a deeper understanding of the phrase; that is to build up a repertoire of examples or family resemblances or, as Saussure prefers, differences. However, as Robert Fogelin points out, "the doctrine of family resemblances does not leave us with nothing to do; instead it invites us to trace out relationships and this should be done with whatever degree of rigour that the subject allows."[23]

Applying the family resemblances approach to self-deception entails placing it along a continuum with other related terms based on a suitable choice of attribute. A common chosen attribute is the degree of conscious intent and this leads to a continuum including delusion, illusion, self-deception, playacting, hypocrisy and deliberate deception. The first two terms are usually described as involuntary. Playacting, in contrast, is usually described as voluntary, for two reasons: the actor chooses to play the part and the audience chooses to allow the pretence. The two sides may be said to collude in the deception. Hypocrisy and deliberate deception are voluntary on the perpetrator's side but involuntary on the victim's side. Self-

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[22] Ferdinand-Mongin de Saussure, *Cours de Linguistic Général,* Paris: Payot, p. 171, trans. and cited Roy Harris, *Language, Saussure and Wittgenstein*, London: Routledge, 1988, p.23.

[23] Fogelin, *Wittgenstein,* p. 136.

deception lies at the cusp in the sense that it is not easy to see whether it is voluntary on either side. Kenneth Marc Harris, for instance, agrees that hypocrisy can be separated from playacting (and delusion) by the ascription of intent. He argues that we "distinguish hypocrisy from…the legitimate stage [and] pathological delusion…by directly ascribing evil to the hypocrite, but not to the stage actor or to the madman".[24] In the theatre, actors do not intend to deceive the audience except in the sense that the theatregoers willingly allow themselves to be deceived, whereas hypocrites deceive their audience against their wills. However, none of these categories are so easily decided in practice. Marc Harris gives an example where playacting and hypocrisy might be confused. The narrator of *The Scarlet Letter* describes the face of the main character, Hester, as "like a mask".[25] The use of the theatrical term might suggest to the reader that she is pretending and appears to give them the choice of whether "to suspend their disbelief" or not. But since within the fictional universe the narrative makes it clear that she is only pretending to be humble whilst secretly plotting to escape with her lover, Dimmesdale, the reader has no difficulty in ascribing the term hypocrisy rather than playacting. The two terms are separated by the additional information provided by the context. This, however, need not be the case. Richard Hannay in John Buchan's *The Thirty Nine Steps* (1915) does genuinely confound the two. In order for Hannay to escape from the pursuing agents of The Black Stone he decides to adopt the persona of a roadman, Alexander Turnbull. He first "set to work to dress for the part".[26] He then "shut off

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[24] Kenneth Marc Harris, *Hypocrisy and Self-Deception in Hawthorne's Fiction,* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988, p. 2.

[25] Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, London: Penguin, 1994, p. 193.

[26] John Buchan, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, London: Penguin, 1991, p.61.

all other thoughts". He did so on the advice of "an old scout [Peter Pienaar]" who had once told him "the secret of playing a part was to think yourself into it".[27] However, he and his audience, this time, are in different positions: he willingly accepts the deceit whereas The Black Stone do not. The reader, as an outsider in this case, knows Hannay is pretending only because the text allows access to his intention. Buchan later reiterates this point from the other side. This time it is The Black Stone who adopt the deceptive mechanism of "being the part". Hannay is confused, in his turn, and says to himself, "these men might be acting; but if they were, where was the audience?"[28] Like their evolutionary forebears, it seems, they are better able to deceive if they deceive themselves first. In effect this brief analysis of terms only leads the thesis back to its functional description of consciousness with an added descriptive term: consciousness is *only* the "telling of a story" or its "spelling-out" or "the living of one's own life as if it were a story" or, now, the "playing of a part".

Separating the descriptive terms should, in principle, become easier if a simple enough situation, such as a fictional story, can be found. Gilbert Ryle favours this approach: "The fact that…examples are faked tends to render them all the better as illustrations of the general principle in question. For irrelevant or conflicting characteristics can be omitted or left in the shade."[29] Lisa Zunshine puts

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[27] Ibid., p. 62.
[28] Ibid., p. 116.
[29] Gilbert Ryle, "Imaginary Objects", *Proceedings of the Aristotelean Society,* Suppl. Vol. xii, 1983, reprinted in Gilbert Ryle, *Collected papers*, vol. 2, Bristol: Thoemes, 1990,. pp 80-81.

the same argument the other way round: "Literature pervasively capitalizes on and stimulates Theory of Mind mechanisms that had evolved to deal with real people."[30]

An exemplary hypocrite should emerge from a close reading of Molière's *Tartuffe,* for the intention here is plain: the play's list of characters specifically describes Tartuffe as "a hypocrite". Insofar as the author has privileged access to his character's mind, the point seems decided. However, there remains a legitimate question to ask: "does the text justify the description?" And the answer is, "it does not" because it is just not possible to eliminate ambiguities in any narrative description of any item in the self-deception continuum.

Tartuffe is taken up by a well-to-do householder, Orgon, who has rescued him from poverty before the play starts. Tartuffe has succeeded in winning Orgon's affection, and also the affection of Orgon's mother, Madame Pernelle, by appearing to them to be a holy man. The rest of the household do not share this interpretation of Tartuffe's behaviour, especially Damis, the son, and Dorine, a servant. Dorine is the most outspoken. She observes, "You imagine he's a saint, but, believe me, he's nothing but a hypocrite."[31] The scene is nicely and correctly set. Molière claims he is "recognisable at once",[32] but this is not a justified claim. Tartuffe, in reality, at this stage appears to have two sides. One of which – the saintly – he presents both to the family and the audience. The audience of theatre-goers do not have access to

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30 Liza Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction: Theories of Mind and the Novel,* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006, p. 10.

31 Molière, *Tartuffe*, in *The Misanthrope and Other Plays*, London: Penguin, 1959, p. 49.

32 Molière, "Preface to the Edition of *Tartuffe* 1669", ibid., p. 100.

the other side – the hypocritical – other than through the testimony of some of the family members. Given the evidence, or lack of it, the audience should be in doubt. They are, in effect, presented with three alternatives. Orgon and Madame Pernelle are right and therefore the rest of the family are wrong. The rest of the family are right in which case Orgon and his mother are deceived for some reason. Or Tartuffe is just an ordinary person and the family are working out their differences using him as a scapegoat. At no stage in the early part of the play does anyone suggest that Tartuffe is a scoundrel – where scoundrel means someone with motives beyond the desire to be seen as a good man when he is not.

As the play progresses more information is provided and the family members and the audience are in a better position to form judgements. Tartuffe does not stop with Orgon's admiration and sponsorship. He goes further. He is invited to marry Orgon's daughter, Mariane, and he tries to make love to Orgon's wife, Elmire. He succeeds in having Damis ejected from the family – disinherited and cursed – and in gaining Orgon's possessions by a deed of gift and a casket containing treasonable secrets. In effect, evidence is sequentially presented that Tartuffe seems to be considerably more than a mere hypocrite. He is at the very least a deliberate confidence trickster. By displaying his unseemly behaviour to some of the characters the theatre-goers are led to tilt their judgements. Of course, it could be that Tartuffe was initially just a hypocrite but as the play progressed and these other opportunities occurred – namely Orgon's lunatic benevolence at the expense of his family - he fell to temptation. Or he could have been a rogue all

along. But since his lies about himself have a wider purpose than merely wishing to be seen to be good, the theatre-goer should, by the end of the play, decide he is more than a hypocrite. It is true that Molière seems to have a wider definition - which includes "scoundrel" - but even this is weak. Harris, perhaps, goes a little further even than Molière. He says "a pure or medieval hypocrite…is a conscious dissembler who deliberately plays a role in order to attain evil ends".[33] However, even this seems inadequate. Tartuffe seems more like a sadistic sociopath who doesn't seem to want gain so much as the pleasure to be obtained with the destruction of a family. Certainly, the audience might be entitled to suppose, he has no interest in what others think of him provided he gains his real purposes. He says to the officer, as the family are in the process of being evicted from their house and Orgon threatened with imprisonment, "Pray deliver me from this futile clamour [the family protestations], sir! Proceed to the execution of your orders."[34] So, however the definition of hypocrite is expanded, its use here does not involve what is its essential character – a desire to seem better than one is. Rather, Tartuffe takes delight in being horrible. It is this which spells his ultimate doom for his behaviour comes to be recognised for what it is and he incurs universal approbation.

If Tartuffe wanted both monetary and sexual gain and, in addition, to think himself well thought of he needed to either keep the two sets of people apart or go further than hypocrisy. He needed to move into self-deception as argued by Rev. Seddon:

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[33] Harris, *Hypocrisy and Self-Deception in Hawthorne's Fiction*, pp. 55-56.

[34] Molière, *Tartuffe*, p. 162.

> A great many, notwithstanding their determination to indulge themselves in criminal practice, and to gratify their darling propensities against the plain rules of reason and justice, would very gladly at the same time have the safety and benefit of religion. Thus they aim at the grossest absurdity and contradiction in nature, to be both religious and vicious. And for this purpose they explain religion to themselves, in such a manner, as may not be inconsistent with their beloved vices…and…settle into the course of self-deceit.[35]

Which is, of course, what Tartuffe is prepared to do when, desperate for Elmire, he justifies his actions with "there are ways and means of coming to terms with Heaven".[36] So, if we believe his sincerity, on this occasion he slips into self-deceit. It has been shown that it is no easy matter to distinguish between criminal deception for gain and hypocrisy on the one hand and it has been further suggested that it is possible for hypocrisy to slip into self-deception on the other.

In a subsequent play, *The Misanthrope*, Molière concentrates on the character Arsinoé. Arsinoé deviates to the other end of the continuum. Here, the centre of gravity of the action is, very definitely, between self-deception and hypocrisy rather that hypocrisy and deliberate villainy. Arsinoé is, like Tartuffe, portrayed as behaving differently in different situations. The fun and action in both plays derive from the inability, on the evidence, to come to any firm opinion. Molière does not, in Fingarette's opinion, provide "the crucial test"[37] which is, for

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35 Rev. John Seddon, *Sermons*: *Discourses on the person of Christ, on the Holy Spirit and on Self-Deception,* Warrington, 1793, p. 98.

36 Molière, *Tartuffe*, p. 151.

37 Herbert Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960, p.58.

him, "whether or not she [Arsinoé] spells out her project to herself".[38] Fingarette spells-out the problem:

> If Arsinoe were to confide in some other person and admit that everything Célimène says is true, that her own prudery and friendliness are a façade designed to deceive Célimène and the others, there would be no problem. We would consider her a cynical hypocrite. Suppose, however, that Arsinoé confides nothing of the sort to anyone (which is in fact the case). We might then look for other signs that *she* is in any case fully aware of it, that she acknowledges it at least to herself. If we found none, if we found signs, instead, that she is sincere, we should then have a case of self-deception.[39]

A possible source of evidence could perhaps come from the idea of privileged access. This has two aspects. It can be asked what the author thinks and what the character thinks. Molière clearly thought that he was using Tartuffe to describe hypocrisy but did not, in the opinion of the thesis, succeed. If Molière's intent - a hidden and unobtainable construct – is unreliable then there needs to be a clearer idea. One way to do this is to, first, recognise that intention is merely a mentalist explanation of the causes and origins of any choice and, then, to replace mentalist evidence with behavioural evidence. That is, it becomes necessary to examine what is available within the containing story. One source of evidence, relevant in the self-deception debate, could be the motivation of the character and this could be achieved by gaining access to the character's inner consciousness. Although this thesis argues this claim has no meaning, it has to be acknowledged that others think it has. Henry James, for one, does, although he suggests it is difficult. He argues, for example, that, "to project yourself into the consciousness of

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38 Ibid., p. 57.
39 Ibid., pp. 55-56.

a person essentially your opposite requires the audacity of great genius".[40] Kennedy-Andrews concludes that Nathaniel Hawthorne has this capability: "his works offer glimpses of the 'the whole deep mystery of man's soul and conscience'."[41] It might be thought that access to consciousness, if it were really possible, would resolve the self-deception debate for the real motivation lying behind the behaviour would become apparent. Whether or not Arsinoé actually tells the outside world she hated Célimène, the inside examination would reveal the truth. But this would be, even if it were possible, to miss the meaning of self-deception. The story representing the character is no different from the story representing narrative-consciousness of the author. It is, by definition, the same inside as outside.

Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* is worth examination in this respect, for Hawthorne does attempt to give access to Dimmesdale's consciousness and it is revealed to be in as much confusion as the external behaviour exhibited by Tartuffe and Arsinoé. The text describes Dimmesdale as being in self-deception but gives two contrary reasons for it. "Whereas Chillingworth suggests Dimmesdale is a self-deceiver because he continues to serve God as a minister, Hawthorne accuses him of self-deception for just the opposite reason: for thinking he can turn his back on his clerical responsibilities."[42] It is neither clear that they both mean the same thing by the use of the term nor whether the term is actually justified. In the case of

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[40] Quoted in David Lodge, "Sense and Sensibility", *Guardian*, Features and Review Section, Saturday, November 2, 2002, p. 6.

[41] Elmer Kennedy-Andrew (ed.), *Nathaniel Hawthorne: Guide to Secondary Sources*, Cambridge: Icon Books, 1999, p. 100.

[42] Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter,* pp. 111-112 and p. 184. Quoted in Harris, *Hypocrisy and Self-Deception in Hawthorne's Fiction,* p. 84.

Chillingworth's claim, Dimmesdale is certainly hypocritical if he preaches good tenets but does not admit he does not follow them himself, but he is not self-deceptive unless he believes he does follow them when he does not. This does not seem to be the case. Dimmesdale is tormented by knowledge of his sins. Nevertheless, this comparison highlights Hawthorne's main concern. Harris puts it well:

> His main concern, I feel, remains the moral dimension of hypocrisy and self-deception, and his greatest contribution to our understanding of this dimension is embodied in the characterizations of Hester and especially of Dimmesdale. The ontological question raised by the study of hypocrisy – what is the real self? – also figures prominently, but is always subordinated to a moral evaluation. With Dimmesdale in particular, the ontological question becomes a moral issue, as the real Dimmesdale can finally be characterised neither as a hypocrite nor as a saint, *unless he can somehow be seen as both*.[43]

Hawthorne concentrates on both the ubiquity of self-deception and, in this passage, its paradoxical nature which he clearly puts into p, not-p form. Interestingly, Kennedy-Andrews interprets ambiguities like this as "not a didactic strategy but a sign of a powerful tension between his attraction to and his fear of his deepest themes. For behind his moralism, and often directly contradicting it, lies a sure insight into everything that is terrible."[44] Kennedy-Andrews means by "terrible" that which is "demoralising in human nature"[45] but, within the context of this thesis, it is considered illegitimate to give "human nature" explanatory power

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43 Harris, *Hypocrisy and Self-Deception in Hawthorne's Fiction*, p. 58. My emphasis.
44 Kennedy-Andrew (ed.), *Nathaniel Hawthorne*, p. 100.
45 Ibid.

without adaptive support. There can be nothing more terrible than awareness of existential futility.

The discussion has led full circle back to Wittgenstein's and Saussure's view that it is no longer necessary or possible to be committed to definiteness of sense: "I think that the notion of family resemblance….helps dispel the commitment to definiteness of sense by exhibiting a set of concepts that violate this standard but are still perfectly serviceable."[46] This suggests that this approach means that it is possible to be comfortable with uncertainty whereas this thesis thinks the opposite is the case. The introduction of the idea of self-deception does lead to uncertainty but this uncertainty is not accepted as the way it is. Just the opposite - it gives rise to a feeling of unease. The only certainty when involved with this aspect of the human condition is uncertainty.

Nevertheless, making judgements is involved in the enjoyment of a reading. It is, as Umberto Eco describes, "an inferential walk" where the model author forces the model reader "to make choices". Sometimes, he says, the text wants to "leave us free to imagine how the story will continue" or "sadistically to show us…that we are to get lost".[47] Here, the case is a variation of this theme. Here there is a negative inferential walk. Uneasiness arises because of an inability to make a decision and uncertainty appears to be intrinsic to the interpretative process of recognising self-deception. Recognition that self-deception is around leads to the

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46 Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*, p. 138.

47 Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods,* p.6-7.

possibility that existential-self-deception (ESD) is around too. Here, the "inferential walk" is warning "us" "where not to look".[48]

The first necessary step in the production of an ESDeS is to warn the reader how to (not) read by inserting a genre-marker for unease. Unease can of course be generated by a number of literary devices, but the unease referred to here arises organically out of its association with the possibility of self-deception. A genre-marker for unease then should be associated with a genre-marker for self-deception and they may be synonymous: in this sense it could be called an **existentially-self-deceptive-unease** marker. In addition, there will emerge, during the process of second or subsequent readings, the existential-self-deceptive genre-markers of meaning, hiding and repetition.

Self-Deceptive Behaviours: Self-Deceptive-Process

It is being argued that it is seldom, if ever, possible to say with certainty that a particular person is in self-deception. The only clear result so far is that there will be a sense of unease elicited by awareness of the possible or actual presence of self-deception: that is, the existence of a story that does not make sense in that it appears to "leave something out".[49] However, it is not necessary to give up: it is only necessary to approach the problem of meaning in a different way. In addition to deducing meaning by comparison it is possible to suggest that the meaning of a word derives from observing the way it is used. Wittgenstein argues that "the use of

[48] Mary Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1980, p. 108.
[49] Ibid., title of chapter 1.

a word in the language is its meaning",[50] and Roy Harris suggests that "this is a formula which Saussure would have no difficulty in endorsing".[51] Finally, Mary Haight might be said to sum up this detour into language theory when she claims that "we diagnose self-deception from behaviour".[52]

Four behaviours, associated with self-deception, have been isolated by researchers in the field. These are:

- An apparent acceptance of two contradictory ideas with the concomitant refusal to accept the contradiction.
- An attitude towards evidence.
- Post-hoc recognition.
- Point of recognition.

It will be found that this list can be mapped on to, with a change of focus, a little reordering and the addition of a crucial step, the plotting of an ESDeS. The results will show that an ESDeS involves a **self-deceptive process** which can consist of up to four stages between an existing **cover story** and its sequel. The stages can be listed as follows:

- **A process of recognition.**
- **A point of recognition.**
- **A process of narration.**
- **A point of narration.**

The identification of two contradictory ideas simultaneously present in a consciousness is too difficult to explain - unless the narrative-consciousness theory

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[50] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar*, trans. A. Kenny, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 60. Quoted in Harris, *Language, Saussure and Wittgenstein*, p.23.

[51] Roy Harris, *Language, Saussure and Wittgenstein*, London: Routledge, 1988, p.23.

[52] Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception,* p.73.

and the ESDeS are accepted - for it is in the very nature of the problem of self-deception that one of the ideas needs to be "hidden". Nevertheless many writers are "convinced that the phenomenon exists"[53] and their evidence comes from many different fields. These include the experimental example, the survey of a real event and the fictional examples discussed here.

Gur and Sackeim provided experimental evidence[54] for a split and the apparent refusal to note the contradiction. They first established that people do not like recognising their own voices. They then carried out an experiment in which subjects were asked to recognise their own voices on a tape recording: "At one level (reflected in the autonomic nervous system) the subjects know the voice belongs to them; at another level (reflected in conscious awareness) the subjects honestly deny this knowledge."[55] It is clear that there is a split into "I recognise my voice" and "I do not recognise my voice", with the second being refused a "spelling-out".

Another example is provided by the outcome of the Mai Lai massacre in Vietnam:

> In 1969 intensive interviews were conducted with a representative sample of San Francisco Bay residents, the subject being the recently published photographs and stories of the Mai Lai massacre in Vietnam.…open ended interviews were conducted with 42 respondents. These data were later supplemented by survey….The respondents were shown the photographs and asked to comment.

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[53] Delroy L. Paulhus, "Introduction to section II", in J. S. Lockard and D. L. Paulhus (eds), *Self-Deception – An Adaptive Mechanism*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988, p. 72.

[54] R. C. Gur and H. A. Sackeim, "Self-deception: A Concept in Search of a Phenomenon", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 37, 1979, pp. 147-169.

[55] Paulhus, "Introduction to section II", p. 73.

The responses essentially stated that the photographs and stories were untrue.

> The refusal to believe that American soldiers would engage in atrocities in the face of the type of evidence that is ordinarily granted credibility [indicated] that…[the]…respondents were engaging in self-deception.[56]

There is every reason to suppose that two contradictory ideas were available to the respondents but, since one was not accepted, it can only be assumed that it was "hidden". The title given to the report was, "It Didn't Happen and Besides They Deserved It".[57] The ironic title introduces the idea that self-deceivers not only deny contrary evidence but generate supportive evidence.

A final example of self-deceptive contradiction is provided by Dimmesdale in *The Scarlet Letter.* Throughout the book Dimmesdale serves (his) God as a minister despite hiding his affair with Hester. This is seen by Chillingworth as self-deceptive as indeed it is if Dimmesdale truly believes he is behaving consistently. Insofar as he gives a sermon implying he is not sinful whilst he is, in fact, being sinful he is certainly hypocritical and the hypocrisy shades into self-deception if he thinks he is not. Nevertheless, it need not and does not stop the effectiveness of the sermon. He preached of how his sins tormented him and so he was able to arouse, because this was true, the compassion of his listeners. It could be said that the sermon was preached in good faith (not in bad faith (not-p)). He personally is a hypocrite but his audience does not believe him. They believe in the sins and are properly

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[56] Theodore Sarbin, "On Self-Deception", *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 364, 1981, p. 220-235.

[57] Ibid., p. 221.

instructed but do not believe that they *really* belong to him: "Souls, it is said, more souls than one, were brought to the truth by the efficacy of that sermon."[58] He can argue, therefore, that it is permissible and legitimate to continue as a minister and to preach sermons. However, the particular sermon he is to give at the time of the Election is different for now he plans to run away with Hester and escape his torment. Dimmesdale can no longer argue that the sermon will be effective in the same sense. Since he does so he will definitely need to move over into self-deception. If he does so, he exactly fits the self-deceptive paradox central to the idea of self-deception. He, as stated by Harris, "believes both p, that he will give his sermon in bad faith and not-p, that he will not give a sermon in bad faith".[59] He knows that he is running away with Hester to escape his torments so the sermon relating his sins cannot be true but he, at the same time, believes it will be effective because it was effective in the past. He says the people "shall say of me…that I leave no public duty unperformed, nor ill performed".[60] The narrator seems to suggest, by looking into his consciousness, that he deliberately fails to recognise that his hypocrisy now is different from the hypocrisy then: "Sad, indeed, that an introspection so profound and acute as this poor minister's should be so miserably deceived!"[61] Harris argues: "He lies to himself that he is no worse a hypocrite now than he was before. It is a patent self-deception."[62]

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58 Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p. 134.
59 Harris, *Hypocrisy and Self-Deception in Hawthorne's Fiction*, p. 85.
60 Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p. 184.
61 Ibid., p. 184.
62 Harris, *Hypocrisy and Self-Deception in Hawthorne's Fiction*, p. 85.

The above examples attempt to show that it is widely recognised that two contradictory ideas can be present in a consciousness at the same time and that one is foregrounded at the expense of the other. It is immediately obvious that it is possible to infer a person's state from evidence. Mary Haight makes this explicit. She says: "In self-deceit the evidence is against the belief held. Once this is pointed out to the person involved, if he then proceeds to resist, by ingenious tactics, the natural implications of the evidence, we feel he is self-deceived."[63] In the examples above it is asserted that the Mai Lai respondents did exactly this. These examples are, of course, lacking the full facts. The beauty of using a fictional text, as suggested by Ryle, is that all the facts that are going to be available are already available. It is not possible, like a Mai Lai respondent, to avoid the natural implications of the evidence by shifting ground.

This is what Orgon and his mother do, in *Tartuffe.* At the beginning of the play (as has been seen) Orgon and his mother are convinced that Tartuffe is a holy man and, therefore, do not believe he is a hypocrite. The evidence against their view builds up. First (as has been seen) there is Dorine's negative testimony. She is just a servant and a gossipy one at that so it is possible to ignore her. There follows further negative testimonies from sources that would normally be believed. And further the negative testimonies seem to be very much a consensus of all other family members: Damis, the son, Cléante, the brother-in-law, and Mariane, the daughter. Again reasons can be found to overlook their testimonies. Orgon and his family, it could be argued, are going through troublesome times and they are just

[63] Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception*, p. 2.

trying to annoy him. But then hard physical evidence starts to accumulate. Orgon's wife's fidelity is put under pressure but still Orgon refuses to believe. He is persuaded to hide under the table whilst Tartuffe makes a further attempt to seduce Elmire. He sees with his own eyes and hears with his own ears that Tartuffe is a hypocrite and it is only then that he believes. But this still isn't enough for his mother. She says, "People are envious of the righteous" and, again, "They'll have made up a hundred idle tales about him", and yet again, "It's human nature to think evil of people."[64] Madame Pernelle is seen defending her false belief right up to the time when the bailiffs come to remove all the family's possessions. She remains prepared to believe in Tartuffe against the collective witness of her entire family. It takes the loss of the family's entire wealth, their house, and the arrest of Orgon to shift her.

The first and second behavioural correlates always go together because the first cannot continue to exist unless it is defended by the second. In Fingarette's terminology "spelling-out" p necessitates burying not-p and burying not-p involves a cover story which is, in effect, a means for keeping at bay the "truth". In the Dimmesdale example given above there is a further dimension. He actually tells his parishioners the truth about himself but they choose not to acknowledge it: "He told his hearers that he was altogether vile, a viler companion of the vilest….They heard it all, and did but reverence him more."[65] Even after he specifically admits to his affair with Hester at his death scene his parishioners explain it away: "he had made

[64] Molière, *Tartuffe*, p. 156.
[65] Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p. 122.

the manner of his death a parable."[66] They, like the Mai Lai respondents, presumably for their own reasons, prefer to believe Dimmesdale is a saint and do not wish to be contradicted.

All the examples exhibit a refusal to accept evidence that is contrary to beliefs and, if that fails, a generation of "ingenious tactics" to rewrite the evidence. This is evidence for, albeit not conclusive for there could be other reasons, self-deception.

The third behavioural correlate requires an autobiographical account. Haight observes that "if I try to report my own self-deceptions, I can only speak of the past; if I am trying now to suppress some unwelcome truth, I cannot say that this is what I am doing or I give the game away".[67] The sentence, "I am deceiving myself" is contradictory. The sentence, "I was deceiving myself" is acceptable. The first answer does, however, appear in literature. The two Marquises in *The Misanthrope* have a hugely comical exchange discussing just this:

CLITANDRE.	You think then, Marquis, that you stand pretty well here? [i.e. in having the affection of Célimène]
ACASTE.	I have some grounds for thinking so.
CLITANDRE.	Believe me, you should rid yourself of such an illusion. You are flattering yourself, my dear fellow – It is sheer self-deception.
ACASTE.	Oh! Of course I am flattering myself.
CLITANDRE.	But what reason have you for thinking you are so fortunate?
ACASTE.	I flatter myself.
CLITANDRE.	On what basis are your hopes founded?

[66] Ibid., p. 220.
[67] Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception*, p. 73.

ACASTE. Self-deception.
CLITANDRE. Have you some certain proof?
ACASTE. I deceive myself.
CLITANDRE. Has Célimène given you some secret assurance?
ACASTE. No, I am cruelly used!
CLITANDRE. Do answer me please!
ACASTE. I met with nothing but rebuffs.
CLITANDRE. Oh! Have done with your foolery and tell me! What reason has she given you to hope?
ACASTE. I'm the unlucky one. You are a happy man. She detests me. One of these days I shall have to go and hang myself.[68]

Clearly the text is ironical since Acaste is not unaware that he has no chance with Célimène even as he says he is deceiving himself to think he does. Since he uses the argument of evidence (as in the paragraph above), it indicates that he has given some serious thought to the subject. And this suggests that this is a post-hoc account – once it was true but now it is not. He is, in effect, playacting what happened in the past.

Other, clearer cut, examples of post-hoc recognition abound. Two examples should affirm this. First, Haight herself reports her "main example will be autobiography".[69] Second, in *The Scarlet Letter*, Roger Chillingworth and Hester are reported to have married back in Europe but the reader might have wondered why, given their apparent disparity in age and interests. Roger answers for himself that he deceived himself: "Misshapen from my birth hour, how could I delude

[68] Molière, *The Misanthrope,* in *The Misanthrope and Other Plays*, London: Penguin, 1959, p. 49.
[69] Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception*, p. 74.

myself with the idea that intellectual gifts might veil physical deformity in a young girl's fancy?"[70]

The fourth correlate of behaviour is described as the *point of recognition* and is heavily based on Fingarette's analysis of *The Iceman Cometh*.[71] In his previous discussion of Arsinoé, he asked how it would be possible to identify self-deceptive behaviour in the absence of a "crucial" test. The answer he essentially comes up with is that her real feelings must at some point slip out: "She might at some particular point in her attacks on Célimène drop the role of prude, at least for a moment and explicitly express her enterprise in duplicity."[72] Fingarette argues that what would be significant about such an admission would be the intense affect going with it. He uses terms such as "moment of triumph or defeat", "it would come out not as an exclamation having novelty for her but as one which expressed aloud what apparently had already been said to herself in silence", "no signs of surprise or reaction to novelty at hearing herself acknowledge the envious project of hers" and "impromptu, even incoherent, groping".[73] This thesis agrees with Fingarette that it is these (typical) signs which are central to the idea of self-deception. The point of recognition carries a power the first three examples do not have. This is because misuse of evidence and recall can be correlates to other terms in the deceptive continuum whereas the point of recognition comes with strong affect. Roger Chillingworth, for example, is reported as having a point of

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70 Op. Cit., Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p. 63.
71 Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, p. 56 et seq.
72 Ibid., p. 57.
73 Ibid., pp. 57-58.

recognition, but it is not the words that count but what goes with them: "The unfortunate physician, while uttering these words lifted his hands with a look of horror…he had never before viewed himself as he did now."[74]

Fingarette draws attention to Hickey's situation in *The Iceman Cometh* in an attempt to breathe a bit more life into the idea. His prolonged exposition fully exploits the idea of emotional climax suggested by Chillingworth's merely stated "horror". The climatic scene in the play presents Hickey relating to his drinking companions his self-justifying account of how he killed his wife. He has been a travelling salesman for years; away from home for long stretches; an unreliable husband; a heavy drinker; a gambler; he has caused his faithful wife many years of misery; he has given her many promises to change his mode of life. He knows what he is doing is wrong (p) but will not admit it (not-p). He distorts the evidence to continue behaving as he does and does so successfully by keeping his wife separate from his drinking companions. But it is an inherently unstable situation. At some point p has to meet not-p. The time when it does is called point of recognition. The point of recognition necessitates a solution. Either p or not-p must go. Fingarette feels it is necessary to quote a long passage to make the point. He omits "several interspersed stage directions and comments by his on-stage audience".[75] This thesis adopts the same technique but not exactly the same omissions.

> HICKEY: That last night I'd driven myself crazy trying to figure some way out for her. I went in the bedroom. I was going to tell her it was the end. But I couldn't do that to her. She was

[74] Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p. 146. The word "horror" is a motif word for recognition of existential angst.

[75] Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, p. 59.

> sound asleep. I thought, God, if she'd only never wake up, she'd never know! And then it came to me – the only possible way out, for her sake. I remembered I'd given her a gun for protection while I was away and it was in the bureau drawer. She'd never feel any pain, never wake up from her dream. So I-
>
> [Hope and most of the others try not to hear; try to ward this off hearing by pounding their glasses and saying things like "Who the hell cares." Hickey *actually* "hasn't appeared to hear" their noise and comments. He continues:]
>
> HICKEY *(simply).* So I killed her.
>
> *There is a moment of dead silence. Even the detectives are caught in it and stand motionless.*
>
> [a comment by another character about a sub-plot]
>
> HICKEY *(obliviously).* And then I saw I'd known that was the only possible way to give her any peace and free her from the misery of loving me. I saw it meant peace for me, too, knowing she was at peace. I felt as though a ton of guilt was lifted off my mind. I remember I stood by the bed and suddenly I had to laugh. I couldn't help it, and I knew Evelyn would forgive me. I remember I heard myself speaking to her, as if it was something I'd always wanted to say: 'Well, you know what you can do with your pipe dream now, you damned bitch!' (*he stops with a horrified start, as if shocked out of a nightmare, as if he couldn't believe he had heard what he had just said. He stammers.*) No! I never -![76]

Up to the last sentence the audience could have thought Hickey was merely a classic hypocrite presenting his crime in a light that would reflect well on himself but, as Fingarette puts it, "Hickey's surprise and shock at his having expressed himself in this way reveals sharply that he was in self-deception."[77] The full effect needs a performance. It is true that Chillingworth "spells-out" for the reader his point of

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[76] Eugene O'Neill, *The Iceman Cometh*, London: Nick Hern Books, 1993, pp. 130-131. Quoted in Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, pp 59-60, and acted by Kevin Spacey at the Old Vic, 1998. Summarised omissions are indicated by [ ] brackets. Stage directions are indicated by italics between speeches and by italics and ( ) brackets within a speech - as in the text.

[77] Ibid., p. 60.

recognition but he can only do so "second hand" through a narrator. An actor can do so much more. The performance adds in, effectively, the stage directions. The "moment of dead silence", and "he stops" are perhaps crucial to making the point that he is genuinely (re)discovering his self-deception for the first time. The final stage direction reinforces, too, the idea that the consciousness is just a story and nothing more. Hickey is placed in exactly the same position as the audience; as an outsider. He "couldn't believe he had heard what he had just said". "He" is just short-hand for Dawkins's "survival machine" which "believed" before but, at the point of recognition, is no longer able to do so.

The Narrative Structure: Covert Plotting

The remaining idea to discuss is how the separation of p and not-p is achieved: how exactly the idea that life is not worth living (not-p) is buried. This takes place inside the (human) machine so it is necessary to look at a third model of consciousness. This view, that "consciousness is an inner sense", has been discussed and dismissed in the introduction but it is without doubt true that many others use it as a working model. David Lodge suggests that the list includes "Locke, Bretano, Kant, Freud and William James".[78] He goes on to quote Antonio Damasio who argues that "whether we like the notion or not something like the sense of self does exist in the human mind as we go about knowing things".[79] Herbert Fingarette argues that this model is normally linked with "such terms as 'know', 'be aware of', and 'be

[78] Lodge, "Sense and Sensibility", p. 4.
[79] Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, quoted in ibid., Lodge, p. 5.

conscious of"".[80] Blackmore also concurs that others hold this view. She acknowledges too that "I have this overwhelming sense that I exist."[81] And, this "I", although illusory, works with such mental concepts as "believe" and "know". The novel, which is the source material for this thesis's argument, is often based on these concepts. Lisa Zunshine might be making exactly this particular point:

> The novel, in particular, is implicated with our mind-reading ability to such a degree that I do not think myself in danger of overstating anything when I say that in its currently familiar shape it exists because we are creatures of ToM [theories of mind].[82]

In this spirit, then, the definition of self-deception given in the introduction has been given in cognitive terms. Now, in addition to the emotional and behavioural correlates already discussed, the essential features of self-deception are also given in cognitive terms. Sackeim makes the mentalist influence more explicit when he later modifies an original list by repeating the formulation but substituting the term "mental contents" for "beliefs".[83] The list given here is provided by Paulhus based on the earlier list provided by Sackeim and Gur:

1. The individual holds two contradictory beliefs
2. The two beliefs are held simultaneously.
3. The individual is not aware of one of the beliefs
4. The act that determines which belief is not subject to the awareness is a motivated act.[84]

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[80] Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, p. 35.

[81] Susan Blackmore, *Consciousness: A Very Short Introduction,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 66.

[82] Liza Zunshine, *Why We Read Fiction,* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006, p. 10.

[83] Harold A Sackeim, "Self-Deception – A Synthesis", in J. S. Lockard and D. L. Paulhus (eds), *Self-Deception – An Adaptive Mechanism,* New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988, p. 162.

[84] Paulhus, "Introduction to section II", p. 73.

The list is, of course, less a definition than a list of necessary correlates. In this it differs from Wittgenstein's family resemblance approach, for each item on the list is considered essential. If any one is peeled away the possibility of self-deception goes with it. The approach is a minefield but one which it is not necessary to enter too deeply. For it does not work. Haight, after an exhaustive study of all possible ways of using "know" and "belief", decided it was not possible to avoid the paradox inherent in the list. She does, however, in her analysis, introduce terms that can be adopted by the ESDeS model. First, she says that if self-deception were to be possible it would have to involve "buried knowledge". She means by buried knowledge, "knowledge…not recalled when recollection is to be expected".[85] She concludes that "one man's knowledge cannot be both buried and not buried".[86] However, it is not necessary to agree with her. Indeed, it may be that she does not agree with herself since she admits, in her post-hoc reflection on her own self-deception, that "I believe that my ways of not admitting that p sometimes took the form of burial."[87] It has to be admitted that here she becomes a "normal" person in the sense that she is stating the obvious with a technical word she is unable to explain. She admits "how this happened [the burial] goes of course beyond my experience".[88] This section intends to remedy this lack of knowledge by using the invention of the concept covert plot to provide an explanatory mechanism.

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85 Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception*, p. 13.
86 Ibid., p. 14.
87 Ibid., p. 74.
88 Ibid.

Haight argues that if deception is to work it must "demand two people".[89] Self-deception therefore needs a **split:** a division into two within one narrative-consciousness. One part of the split will "know" and the other part will not. She investigates a number of possibilities including multiple personalities,[90] hypnosis[91] and a Freudian unconscious,[92] but concludes that none of them serves the purpose. She repeats: "I have argued that self-deception is literally a paradox. Therefore it cannot happen. Deceptions need a split between the deceiver and the deceived…and the only split that we may (sometimes) find in ordinary men is one that will not allow an idiomatic reflexive use."[93]

Her approach can be included with what Fingarette calls the "cognitive-perception" family. He is not surprised that the attempt to explain self-deception in these terms leads to failure. He proposes, instead, a fundamentally new "volition-action family".[94] That is, he changes the mind metaphor to a behaviourist model which is, according to Haight, a "shift from a passive model for consciousness to that of a skill".[95] Fingarette himself is absolutely specific: "the model I suggest is that of a skill."[96] This area of philosophy is, again, another minefield suitable for only trained philosophers but, again, there is no need to go into it too far. Haight shows that the approach, appealing as it is, reduces to her own and again concludes that it leaves self-deception unexplained. She argues that "as long as self-deceivers

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89 Ibid., p. 24.
90 Ibid., pp. 24-36.
91 Ibid., pp. 38-42.
92 Ibid., pp. 42-51.
93 Ibid., p. 73.
94 Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, p. 35.
95 Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception*, p. 89
96 Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, p. 38.

are people",[97] "know" and "belief" terms cannot be eliminated. Nevertheless Fingarette's formulation is used by many commentators including Paulhus, Marc Harris, Sarbin and Bittner. Paulhus draws attention to the fact that "the Fingarette book…provided…a clear definition to which subsequent theorists could anchor their own positions".[98] Harris adds: "I find the account of the mechanism of self-deception offered by Herbert Fingarette illuminating with regard to the behaviour of certain Hawthornian self-deceivers."[99] Morris Eagle elaborates on what this might mean: "According to Fingarette, the self-deceiver engages in a **project** and purposely avoids spelling out some feature of his engagement in order to escape guilt, and responsibility, and in order to maintain a particular personal identity." He regards this stance as "a thoroughly moral one".[100] Fingarette's point of view, so described, is specifically agreed with by Sarbin: "I agree with Fingarette that human conduct is influenced by the skill in spelling-out."[101]

Fingarette's formulation introduces, then, the processes of **spelling-out**, **not-spelling-out** and cover story which turn out to be useful, also, to the narrative-consciousness model. The formulation, it has already been noted, suggests an active model of mind in which "to become explicitly conscious of something is to be

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97 Haight, *A Study of Self-Deception*, p. 92.
98 Paulhus, "Introduction to section II", p. 71.
99 Harris, *Hypocrisy and Self-Deception in Hawthorne's Fiction*, p. 3.
100 Morris Eagle, "Psychoanalysis and Self-Deception", in J. S. Lockard and D. L. Paulhus (eds), *Self-Deception – An Adaptive Mechanism,* New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988, p. 79.
101 Theodore Sarbin, "On Self-Deception", *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 364, 1981, p. 226.

exercising a certain skill"[102] called "spelling-out",[103] as in "he is so stupid you have to spell everything out for him". Fingarette goes on:

> exercise of this skill requires sizing up the situation in order to assess whether there is an adequate reason for spelling-out the engagement. And the corollary of this is that in exercising the skill we are also assessing the situation to see whether there is an adequate reason *not* to spell-out the engagement.[104]

Using this terminology a person in self-deception might be characterised as "a person of whom it is a patent characteristic that even when normally appropriate he *persistently* avoids spelling-out some feature of his engagement in the world".[105] This means that the person persistently adopts a policy "never to make explicit" his action or, in other words, the person might be said "to hide [the action]".[106] Fingarette then inverts what might be regarded as the normal way of looking at consciousness. He argues that it is not, as might be expected, the normal procedure to spell-out an engagement in the world. For the most part behaviour happens without awareness of the behaviour entering consciousness. Indeed, being too aware of what is being done can often interfere with performance as in many motor skills such as driving a car or playing the violin. Fingarette says, "generally speaking, the particular features of an individual's engagement in the world need not be, and usually are not spelled-out by him".[107] Indeed, "we must come to take its absence for granted".[108] Fingarette is making an empirical argument here. He observes that "absence" is normal but does not give a reason for it. Once again the

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102 Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, p. 38 et seq.
103 Ibid., p. 39.
104 Ibid., p. 42.
105 Ibid., p. 39.
106 Ibid., p. 49.
107 Ibid., p. 40.
108 Ibid., p. 42.

use of a claim of "normal" is seen as insufficient. The evolutionary argument provided by this thesis provides a better justification for his observation. Avoidance is the default position because it is the first necessary attitude. If existential futility had not been avoided the human race as presently constituted would not have been here. Avoidance is, therefore, the normal behaviour. So, if not-spelling-out is normal then it is spelling-out that needs explanation. Fingarette would argue that p is available, even if hidden, but need only to be spelled-out if there is a demand. If there is such a demand and yet a decision is made not-to-spell-out then it follows that this must also be for a reason. It is asserted, here, that the two - a reason to spell-out and a reason not-to-spell-out - may, under specific circumstances, coincide. If, for example, in the presence of awareness of existential futility, it was deemed necessary not-to-spell-this-out (for selfish gene reasons) then it would be necessary to spell-something-else-out to cover the gap. It is here that a change of terminology can be introduced, for Fingarette argues that "the phrase "spell-out" suggests an activity which has a close relation and analogy to linguistic activity".[109] So "spelling-out" and "telling stories" suggest each other. Insofar as the not-spelling-out is a story it is a covert story. Insofar as spelling-out is a story it is the overt story. The overt story protects the "hidden" by providing a reason for living: a project. In effect, the process transforms a reason for not living into a reason for living. Once again, despite different motivation and terminology, the same conclusion is reached. Fingarette is concerned to explain normal-self-deception and invents the terms hidden and cover story. This thesis is concerned to explain a prior

[109] Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, p. 39.

function: to explain existential-self-deception and uses the term process of narration to explain the generation of an available covert plot and a foregrounded overt plot.

One final point needs to be developed at this stage. Haight, as has been noted, discounts the "literal" possibility of self-deception but still attempts to find a use for the term self-deception. In so doing she confirms a further useful idea: collusion. She says, "If self-deception works as I think, it is often a lie only to other people."[110] That is, A knows perfectly well that what he wants to persuade B is false. B should call him a liar but is persuaded not to by uncertainty. If the "lie" is so outrageous that B cannot believe that A would attempt it then B entertains the possibility that A must believe it (because he is mad – at least on this point). Haight explains: "While we hesitate, he gains more time."[111] The real reason, Haight argues, for the "outrageous lie" is that "what he may dread above everything else is *having to admit* to us that p".[112] If the lie concerns awareness of existential futility this explanation makes perfect sense: not only does the self-deceiver not want to admit that p but he *cannot* admit to p – not unless "he" gives up his reasons for living. It is also clear why B should entertain "uncertainty". In this special case (of existential futility) it is in B's self-interest to do so. Haight goes on to make this claim specific. She says the reason why the term self-deception is used even though it cannot literally be true is just for this reason: "for its suggestion of paradox: its ambivalence matches what we feel about self-deceivers."[113] Haight is, in effect,

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110 Haight, *A Study of Self-Dec*eption, p. 108.
111 Ibid., p. 109.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid., p. 120.

restating the thesis's assertion that the presence of self-deception necessarily introduces unease and the purpose of the unease is to tell the other person, B, where "not to look". She adds that the uncertainty is necessarily shared between the self-deceiver and the intended-deceived.

The idea of collusion is developed by Rüdiger Bittner who very definitely moves the focus to the audience. He approaches this idea though the consideration of the relationship between Olive and Verena in Henry James's *The Bostonians* (1886). Olive and Verena are intimate friends and have in common a devotion to the feminist cause. Basil Ransom admires Verena and does not like the cause so tries to get Verena to leave both it and Olive. There is a point at which the reader would not know Verena's "real" mind so are in the same position as Olive when Verena asks for her help. She seems to be in two minds: she asks Olive to persuade her against Ransom but does not actually leave him. Olive would argue, says Bittner, that "Verena's request for help against Ransom is not sincere. It is due to self-deception. Verena does think, Olive concedes, that she wishes to be saved from Ransom. But in thinking this she is deceived, Olive claims; deceived by herself."[114] Bittner's suggestion follows Haight's line of argument. He says Verena is only temporarily self-deceived for she is just trying to gain time to tell her friend of her new, real feelings. It is Olive who is actually self-deceived. She is avoiding the truth: "to avoid the unpleasant consequences of admitting it",[115] where "it" is Verena's perceived treachery and the consequential loss of friendship. Olive's

[114] Rüdiger Bittner, "Understanding a Self-Deceiver", in B. P McLaughlin and A. Oksenberg Rorty (eds), *Perspectives in Self-Deception*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988, p. 535.
[115] Ibid., p. 542.

attribution of self-deception to Verena allows her to think that Verena's prevarication is less culpable than an outright lie. Bittner relocates the site of the self-deception from an individual mind to the interpersonal space; space that is, in fact, available to all. In the same way as chess does not work unless both players disregard the actuality of the pawn and accept the rules, pain reduction does not work unless Olive and Verena agree to the rules of self-deception. Olive is "happier" thinking that it is Verena who is self-deceived and Verena is content that they have both gained time to work out the dilemma; a story that will accommodate the new situation. Finally Bittner, like Haight, agrees that when a lie is "unbelievable" it will be, of necessity, temporary. This analysis, of course, merely reiterates Triver's "monogamous male" scenario so it is not surprising that collusion is central to the idea of covert plotting.

It is now possible to return to the narrative-consciousness model and the structure of the "story" that represents consciousness. The above analysis has identified the following:

- There must be a split.
- The story is in the (public) space between individuals.
- There must be a not-spelling-out (hiding)(buried knowledge) and a spelling-out (cover story).
- The story will be accompanied by uncertainty.
- The story will be temporary.

In the light of these, Sackeim's four-point straw man list can be modified as follows and provides the essential framework of the process of narration within the ESDeN:

1. The story created by consciousness holds two contradictory stories (p and not-p)

2. Both stories have to be available within the text
3. One story is immediately available on first reading and will be called the overt plot and the other is not and will be called the covert plot.
4. The storytelling is **intentional**.

In addition the previous sections have indentified that:

5. The story will be genre-marked. Initially this will be by self-deceptive unease. A second reading will uncover other markers: a meaning marker and a hiding marker will indicate recognition of existential self-deception and the existence of a covert plot respectively and contribute, in addition, by their presence to the idea of collusion or intention. There may also be an additional repetition genre-marker to recognise that the cover story will need to be repeated or replaced.

6. There is a possibility that the immediately available (overt) story will follow a sequence of process of recognition, point of recognition, choice, process of narration and point of narration and if so this will serve as another genre-marker indicating a mirror covert plot.

The next chapter will acknowledge that there seems to be, at first sight, an overlap between the ESDeN and the modernist novel - they seem to have several ideas in common and seem to originate at the same period of time. However, the chapter shows that to identify the two would be a mistake but, despite drawing distinctions between them, makes it possible to see the two as more of a partnership than an opposition. The chapter will conclude that the ESDeS has the **prior** idea: that covert plotting must exist before overt plotting but notes that overt plotting and its alternative presentations and interpretations serve the equally essential purpose of hiding the covert.

Chapter 2

The Provenance of the theory I: An Elaboration of the Existentially-Self-Deceptive-Narrative-Consciousness Theory

This thesis claims that all consciousnesses, because they are surviving, must accommodate knowledge of existential futility. This does not mean they are all telling an ESDeS. However, as a matter of logic, there are only four[1] positions available to people placed near to existential "horror". These are:

- Simply to be unaware of not-p (to be unaware of existential futility)
- To become aware of not-p and to commit physical suicide (assuming that two-way interaction between the narrative-consciousness and behaviour is possible).
- To be aware of not-p but to (deliberately) bury it.
- To be aware of not-p and to accept it.

The three positions left, after excluding suicide, which needs no ongoing story, will be accommodated by three types of story: **Story-1**, **Story-2** and **Story-3**, where Story-2 is an alternative name for an ESDeS. A taxonomy that tries to differentiate one form of story from others is not a new idea so the creation of an alternative classification has to be justified. This is especially true since the proposed new genre emerges at roughly the same time as the modernist novel and appears to have many things in common with it. This is not surprising since within the novel genre, as David Trotter shows in his "The modernist novel" there are distinctions which deserve sub-genre status: "To write about the modernist novel, as opposed to the Victorian novel say, or the Edwardian novel, is to write…about the possibilities of

[1] Just as other categories of theories of mind can be imagined other categories of story can be invented: e.g. madness or repression into a hypothetical unconscious.

the *genre*."[2] So, in a similar spirit, this thesis intends to compare the modernist novel with the ESDeN. They both appear, at first sight, to be novels in the usually intended sense of the genre as they both might be seen to be concerned with "the representation of life in all its diversity".[3] However, whereas the modernist novel is concerned with asking fundamental questions about the genre (the novel) the ESDeN transcends the genre. It is significantly and fundamentally different and the difference is so great that separate genre status is allocated to the ESDeN. The modernist novel is properly called a sub-grouping of the novel because whatever its differences from the "Victorian novel" it still retains a common focus: "to represent reality",[4] whereas this is not necessary for the ESDeS nor is it its primary function. Its primary function is to make possible the story even if the story is not concerned with this focus. It is this prior functioning and (theoretical) independence of content that is taken to justify calling the ESDeN a new genre.

The first major similarity between the modernist novel and the ESDeN is concerned with the dates connected with the two types of text. It has been well documented that the modernist novel has been fairly consistently identified as existing somewhere between the mid or late nineteenth century and the mid twentieth century although some commentators make more expanded or more restricted claims. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane and Pericles Lewis mark these extremes and their flexibility. Bradbury and McFarlane use 1890-1930

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[2] David Trotter, "The Modernist Novel" in Michael Levenson (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 70. My emphasis.

[3] Wallace Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative,* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986, p. 23.

[4] Pericles Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 4.

in the title of their collection of essays on Modernism[5] and, more recently, Lewis has asserted that "the history of modernist literature and art is the history of a century of crisis from the revolutions of 1848 to the Second World War".[6] The ESDeS, of course, has not, before this thesis, been identified as a distinct category. However, it has been shown, by this thesis, to necessarily involve a split into overt and covert plotting and to be intimately connected with self-deception and both of these attributes have been noticed during the same, flexible, period. CedricWatts has identified types of works which map on to the idea of split: some works "seemed to be divided against themselves and to resemble, for example, big paradoxes or even self-contradictions".[7] He dates their existence as "mainly of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries".[8] Self-deception too becomes more prominent at this time. Harris says, of *The Scarlet Letter,* "we are in a world pervaded by hypocrisy and self deception" and Palmer says self-deception "might almost be considered the preoccupation of modern literature".[9] Although the importance of self-deception and modernist techniques to novels became apparent during the latter part of the nineteenth century they had probably contributed to earlier works. Self-deception is evident in *Tartuffe,* for instance, and earlier examples of "modernist" literature can always be identified. Larry Giggs spells this

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5 Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (eds), *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, London: Penguin, 1991.

6 Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*, p. 33.

7 Cedric Watts, *The Deceptive Text: An Introduction to Covert Plots*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984, p.19.

8 Ibid., p. 15.

9 Anthony Palmer, "Characterising Self-deception", *Mind*, New Series, Vol. 88, No. 349 (Jan 1979), p. 50.

out: "Molière is a modernist."[10] He claims Molière's comedy "anticipates many of the key preoccupations and insights of recent theoretical work".[11] What is significant is that both the modernist novel and the ESDeN eventually became explicitly noticed.

Wallace Martin points out that "a comprehensive theory of the [novel] genre should provide some explanation of why it appeared".[12] It is not, therefore, unreasonable to ask, also, why the ESDeS appeared. The reasons will be found in the same set of "multiple causes".[13] Commentators have been aware of these causes for the last fifty years. Of course they only relate them to the novel but their arguments apply equally to the ESDeN. One of the reasons why Riggs thought Molière could be a modernist was because "he seems to endorse the replacement of the authoritarian religious discourse with secular persuasion".[14] Ian Watt, in discussing the rise of the novel, argues that "both the philosophical and the literary innovations must be seen as parallel manifestations of a larger change - that vast transformation of Western civilisation since the Renaissance which has replaced the unified world picture of the Middle Ages".[15] Wallace Martin argues that "for those who conceive the novel as the depiction of social reality, its appearance marks the emergence of the middle class as the shaping force of history, ending the period when literature portrayed all characters but the aristocracy as crude, comic or

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10 Larry Riggs, *Molière and Modernity: Absent Mothers and Masculine Births,* Charlottesville: Rockwood Press, 2005, p. 2.
11 Ibid., p. ii.
12 Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative,* p. 23.
13 Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism,* p. 33.
14 Riggs, *Molière and Modernity*, p. 2.
15 Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, London: Penguin, 1972, p.34.

unworthy of serious treatment".[16] Eagleton describes the change to the modernist novel in a similar way: "Modernism reflected the crack-up of a whole civilisation. All the beliefs which had served nineteenth century middle-class society so splendidly - liberalism, democracy, individualism, scientific enquiry, historical progress, the sovereignty of reason - were now in crisis."[17] Pericles Lewis concurs:

> The nineteenth century experienced simultaneous crises that contributed in a variety of ways to the development of modernism in the early twentieth century. These transformations can be grouped into three major categories: the literary and artistic (crisis of representation); the socio-political (crisis of liberalism); and the philosophical and scientific (crisis of reason).[18]

There is one other unambiguous identity. Neither the modernist novel nor the ESDeN would include all narratives written during the specified period within their category. Commentators discussing the modernist novel include certain writers in its canon and, therefore by implication, exclude others. A list provided by Bradbury and McFarlane, for example, includes "James, Mann, Conrad, Proust, Svevo, Joyce … [and] … Gide".[19] Rachel Potter, for another example, in *Modernism and Democracy,* demonstrates that the understanding of modernist culture has shifted with the inclusion of previously marginalised writers: "Critical accounts which have traced the impact of…modernist writing have concentrated on the works of Hulme, Pound…and Eliot" but have not included others. She asserts that "writers such as Gertrude Stein, Djuna Barnes…and Mina Loy have not

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16 Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative,* p. 19.

17 Terry Eagleton, *After Theory,* London: Penguin, 2004, p. 64.

18 Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism,* p. 3. Leigh Wilson, *Modernism*, London: Continuum, 2007, p. 8, uses arts and culture, philosophy and religion, politics and economics and science.

19 Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism*, p. 29.

figured in these accounts".[20] Suzanne Raitt provides another recent example by foregrounding May Sinclair as a "modern Victorian".[21] The ESDeS in comparison is more stable. Watts makes the point that the ESDeN is just as non-inclusive as the modernist novel but gives a less ambiguous mechanism for identifying it: "every narrative has an overt plot; but [only] some narratives contain, in addition to the overt plot, at least one covert plot".[22] A novel will be accepted as an ESDeS only if it has an intentional, prior, covert plot.

After these similarities and the crucial difference, other differences start to emerge but they all reduce essentially to the notion already identified: that ESDeS is prior to the possibility of a modernist novel. This is discovered in a number of ways and the first is by looking at the disagreement over which novels to include in each category. ESDeNs include Conrad, for example, but exclude both James and Gide. The reason for this differentiation can be approached through a look at the history of the novel and will conclude that ESDeS has one prime requirement in its need for a covert plot mechanism which mimics the hiding of existential futility in a narrative-consciousness. *Heart of Darkness* does contain a covert plot whereas *Strait is the Gait* (1909) and "The Figure in the Carpet" (1896) do not. In addition, although this notion of prior has been borrowed from previous usages it has been given a new sense. Nevertheless this notion of prior is given substance by showing two examples from its history: it is to be found during a study of the history of criticism

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[20] Rachel Potter, *Modernism and Democracy: Literary Culture, 1900-1930,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

[21] Suzanne Raitt, *May Sinclair: A Modern Victorian*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000.

[22] Watts, *The Deceptive Text,* p.1.

and through more particular debates such as whether or not plotting is the fundamental concern of the fictional narrative process. Penultimately, a return will be made to the direct comparison between the modernist novel and the ESDeN by looking at a selection of details which enable finer differentiations to be made. Finally, having established that the notion of covert plotting is central to the new genre, ESDeN, a way of increasing the probability of identifying one prior to its reading is discussed.

It is an indisputable fact that critics have observed a change from one type of narrative to another. Several taxonomies have been suggested to describe the change. An example, which maps on to the Story continuum, is one in which narratives are described in terms of "the nature of the worlds and characters they depicted".[23] The axis extends from myth where the "hero is superior in *kind*" to mere mortals to irony where the hero is "inferior to ourselves in power or intelligence". An alternative naming can be provided for this scheme in which the epic is replaced by the romantic novel which in turn is replaced by the realist novel. The two schemes can be regarded as identical if the realist novel is identified as one which has to have a hero who is "superior neither to others nor to their environment":[24] that is to "ourselves". The modernist novel is more difficult to classify on this axis but it can also be said to lie in this area if Pericles Lewis has made a correct observation of it. Modernist literature, he asserts, "continued to represent reality, sometimes in distorted forms or in nightmarish parody, sometimes

[23] Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative,* p. 32.
[24] Ibid., p. 33.

in comic detail or with multiple layers of symbolic intention, but usually with some implicit ideal of mimesis underlying all the literary experiments".[25] ESDeS, however, does not fit easily into such taxonomies. The reason for this is, once again, that it has at its heart the division into two types of plotting which necessarily associates the process and the point of recognition and the subsequent hiding associated with the process and point of narration with the **universal**, and the content of the distracting overt plotting with the **individual**. The covert plotting, therefore, must exist for everyone. Palmer reports Henry James's opinion of the characters in Hawthorne's work: "they should not be regarded as characters at all but 'as representatives…of a single state of mind', so that 'the interest of the story lies, not in them, but in the situation, which is insistently kept before us'."[26] Harris reinforces this view: "aside from the outsiders like the Indians and the sailors, no one is completely clear of hypocrisy and self-deception."[27] The overt plot, in contrast, concerns itself with an individual and it can use any mode. Its theme, therefore, can be anything - in *The Scarlet Letter* it just happens to be adultery - and with any mode, mythical, romantic or realist.

So far the similarities and differences between the modernist novel and the ESDeN have been essentially empirical but it needs to be asked why the replacement movements take the form that they do. In each case the modernist theorist gives the answer in one form and the ESDeS theorist in another. The

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[25] Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*, p. 4.

[26] Kenneth Marc Harris, *Hypocrisy and Self-Deception in Hawthorne's Fiction,* Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988, p. 69.

[27] Ibid., p. 48.

development of the modernist's innovative ideas can be described as the writer's "attempt to respond to [the] crisis of representation".[28] Lewis argues this took two forms: "a crisis in both the content and the form of artistic representation."[29] As far as form was concerned, modernist writers required "the creation of new conventions of representation, more appropriate than the old ones to the modern age".[30] This means, in effect, the new conventions had to be experimental: "modernists wanted to create art which intersected with the world in new, strange and disturbing ways."[31] As far as content was concerned the modernists came to think that:

> For the romantics, the world was full of hidden meaning which the artist had to discover. The modernist generally saw the world as devoid of inherent significance. For them the task of the artist was not to discover a pre-existent meaning, but to create a new meaning out of the chaos and anarchy of actual modern life.[32]

It is here the difference lies. The modernist makes the existential dilemma a theme whereas the ESDeS theorist makes it a prior assumption. Before resources can be allocated to the awareness of existential futility it must be hidden: the theme can only be written about once its importance is negated. The ESDeS theorist therefore argues that the novel will now be *divided* as of *necessity*. This means that there now *has* to exist not only an overt plot but also a covert plot. The overt reading may well adopt the experimental techniques characteristic of modernist literature but it is not essential to ESDeS. The experimental techniques, however, will serve a crucial purpose for ESDeS. A particular aspect, for example, is that "The

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28 Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism*, p. xviii.
29 Ibid., p. 2.
30 Ibid., p. 5.
31 Wilson, *Modernism*, p. 8.
32 Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism,* p. 8.

modernists hoped to shock the middle classes out of their complacency"[33] by paying attention to "taboo subject matters, such as masturbation, sodomy, and other sexual acts".[34] The effect, however, is two-fold. If a work has the desired "modernist" effect then it will also have the effect of ensuring that the reader does not notice the underlying, invariant, existence of the covert plot. Although it is the experimentation which is of importance to the modernist writer, from the perspective of ESDeS it is only a reflection of the very traditional evolutionary motivation. Covert plotting is essential, any particular experimental technique is optional: as a technique within the overt plot it merely serves the function of ESDeS. It could of course be seen as an ironic function. It tells of existential angst and discusses authenticity when it is, in fact, disguising the very act it appears to make clear. Modernist novels *may*, to paraphrase Frank Kermode, proclaim *a* truth … and at the same time, conceal [*the*] truth.[35]

The conclusion that covert plotting is a prior can be approached from a different direction. Instead of comparing the modernist novel with the ESDeS directly it is possible to examine terms used by other literary theorists to see if they mean the same thing within narrative-consciousness theory. New Criticism was a dominant trend in English and American literary criticism in the mid twentieth century, from the 1920s to the early 1960s. Its adherents advocated close reading of poems and rejected extra-textual sources including and especially biography.

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[33] Ibid., p. 13.

[34] Ibid., p. 28.

[35] Paraphrased Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979, p. 47. The actual quotation is: "Parable, it seems, may proclaim a truth as a herald does, and at the same time, conceal truth like an oracle" and is discussed in the next chapter.

The same ideas obtained substance, for different reasons, after Derrida's famous claim that "there is nothing outside the text".[36] Derrida is drawing attention to the fact that the purpose of critical reading and interpretation is not to reproduce what the writer thought and expressed in the text. Peter Barry argues that Derrida wants to suggest that "critical reading must *produce* the text since there is nothing behind it for us to reconstruct."[37] If this is so, the functional effect is the same as the New Critics. The narrative-consciousness theory avoids metaphysics by going a little further than even this. It asserts that there is not even a self beyond the text to produce the language that may or may not describe a reality beyond the words. To make this point clearly actually requires a step back in theoretical terms to structuralism. Wallace Martin describes this difference as a change of focus. It is:

> not "why is this story unique?" but "how and why is it so similar to others?" The question becomes not "what did this (identifiable) author mean?" but "what function does this (anonymous) collective myth serve when it is repeated on certain occasions?"[38]

Barry describes this as what Structuralists, amongst other things, try to do: they try to relate a text to some larger invariant "such as a projected model of an underlying universal narrative structure.[39] However, what structuralism means by underlying structure is not the same as ESDeS. What structuralism has in mind is some invariant in the form of a fixed story structure such as boy+girl fall in love despite their families hating each other giving rise to two different overt plots such as

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[36] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, p. 158.

[37] Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002, p 69.

[38] Martin, *Recent Theories of Narrative,* p. 23-24.

[39] Barry, *Beginning Theory,* p 49.

Romeo and Juliet and *West Side Story*. The first part of the division could be called underlying but it is not covert. A covert plot is a "purposeful sequences of events"[40] exactly like any other plot except that it is "hidden, so that it may elude readers…at a first reading".[41] The second part of the division is available at a first reading and is definitely overt. It is obvious that the former is prior to the latter. It is also obvious that the former is much more stable in form than the latter. In this sense, from the structuralist perspective, there can only be a small number of invariants. Christopher Booker, for example, suggests that all stories can be boiled down to (only) seven archetypal themes.[42] In contrast, there are an almost infinite number of overt plots. ESDeS's invariant, however, is more extreme than this: its invariant is singular - the covert plot; the hiding of existential angst. This hiding must be prior to even the structuralist prior. The written narrative exists only because a narrative-consciousness is writing it and it is either writing it to avoid awareness of existential angst or, at least, using the same techniques that it uses to maintain its idea of self. In this form the invariant is psychologically essential: singular and universal among those who have experienced "The Horror!" The overt plotting is clearly pluralist and a matter of individual choice.

A final way of looking at the novel in relation to this notion of prior is to revisit the debate between advocates of the primacy of plotting and the advocates of the primacy of character. The thesis comes down on the side of the advocates of

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40 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 30.
41 Ibid., p. 30.
42 Christopher Booker, *Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories,* London: Continuum Press, 2004.

plot being prior to character. The idea that plot is prior to character is not new. Aristotle says in his *Poetics*: "We maintain, therefore that the first essential…is Plot; and that characters come second."[43] Vladimir Propp is more specific: "What counts is their [the characters] role as vehicles of the action."[44] Peter Brooks agrees with this general assertion: "And yet, one must in good logic argue that plot is somehow prior to those elements most discussed by most critics."[45] Brooks comes, after a long discussion of possible interpretations of what is meant by plot, to a working definition that takes plot to mean "the outline or armature of the story that supports and organises the rest".[46] Clearly all these authorities are talking about plot as an opposition to character and as such are discussing whether or not this is true of the overt plot. The idea works equally well, however, if it is used to refer to the division between the covert plot and the overt plot. In an ESDeS, covert plotting is the basis that "supports and organises the rest". It is in this sense that it is prior to overt plotting; in a necessary way, not as a matter of literary choice. Brooks then has three further things to say about plot(s) which continue to make sense in the context of ESDeS. He argues that it is "a form of thinking, a way of reasoning about a situation",[47] that "they are intentional structures",[48] and that they "explain and understand where no other form of explanation will work".[49] That is, a narrative-consciousness writes the story of self and this necessarily involves a covert plot. The overt plot is essential too - to hide the covert plot - but the thematic

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43 Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. W.Hamilton Fyfe, London: Heinemann, 1927, p. 27.
44 Quoted in Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, p.15.
45 Ibid., p. 4.
46 Ibid., p. 11.
47 Ibid., p. 9.
48 Ibid., p.13.
49 Ibid.

content or interpretation of the thematic content is secondary to the covert plotting. James, for a final example, famously discusses character: "what is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?"[50] This is interesting but, whether or not he is seen as correct, it is not the concern of this thesis. This thesis thinks he is simply describing the content of the overt. In so doing he further differentiates the concept of the novel from the ESDeS. For ESDeS the contrast is not between character and plot but between one type of plot and another. Hiding is the precondition, whether James knew of it or not, of his project. There can be no point and no interest in a project until existential futility has been hidden.

The two essential points of this chapter are an ESDeS requires a particular invariant and this is the covert plot and it sees all overt plots as mere **distracters.** These points can be pressed home by returning to the field shared by the modernist novel and the ESDeN and looking at fine details. This thesis has chosen four: individualism, repetition, split and interpretation. Once again the terms are common to both kinds of novel but the ESDeN will emerge after each discussion with a significantly different perspective.

Ian Watt, as has been seen, identifies the rise of the novel, and by implication the rise of Story-2, with the more general transformation of Western society. He describes the result of the change: it "presents us, with a developing but

[50] Henry James, "The Art of Fiction", in Morris Shapiro (ed.), *Selected Literary Criticisms*, London: Penguin, 1968, p. 88.

unplanned aggregate of particular individuals having particular experiences at particular times and in particular places".[51] He goes on to state that the changes he describes might be actually "characterised by that vast complex of interdependent factors denoted by the term 'individualism'."[52] Pericles Lewis makes a similar connection between the individual and the developing political environment:

> Liberalism could be grounded philosophically either in Immanuel Kant's notion of autonomy – here the autonomy of self-governance of the rational individual – or in the utilitarian ideal, proposed by Jeremy Bentham and later elaborated by John Stuart Mill, of the greatest good for the greatest number. In either case, it challenged established authorities, such as monarchy and aristocracy and favoured the deliberative decision-making of those judged capable of self-government.[53]

This thesis would agree with this general view provided "individual" or "those judged capable" has no connotation of a "we" but is shorthand for individual-storytelling-machine; the narrative-consciousness. Modernist literature also retains the notion of trying to represent the real world but acknowledges that each representation will depend upon the individual perceptual framework. Ian Watt describes the two necessary conditions for this: "society must value every individual…and there must be enough variety of belief and action among ordinary people for a detailed account of them to be of interest to other ordinary people".[54] He then acknowledges that "it is probable that neither of these conditions…obtained very widely until fairly recently [the middle of the nineteenth century]".[55]

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51 Watt, *The Rise of the Novel,* p. 34.
52 Ibid., p. 66.
53 Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism,* p. 13.
54 Watt, *The Rise of the Novel,* p. 66.
55 Ibid.

Girard in his *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* provides an account which also combines the theory of the novel with the theory of the individual. He asserts that romances replaced the use of transcendent models in the form of gods with heroes who serve as role models:

> Men who cannot look freedom in the face are exposed to anguish. They look for a banner on which they can fix their eyes. There is no longer God, king, or lord to link them to the universal. To escape the feeling of particularity they imitate another's desires; they choose substitute gods because they are not able to give up infinity.[56]

However, whilst heroes and gods have a lot in common they have one significant difference: the former have to be *chosen*. A romance will make this pattern obvious: it will end with satisfaction with the chosen hero and a happy ending. The novel, and the individual choice, moves the plotting further into realism. It recognises that the adoption of a role model need not lead to satisfaction: it may lead to what John Lye, in his website posted teaching notes, calls "ambiguous endings".[57] This means that, in the move towards realism, it is recognised that the original role model will need to be replaced by another. The replacement, however, need not be so concrete. It could be that the individual merely needs a different telling of the same story, a new interpretation of the story or a different story altogether. This pair of ideas is also central to ESDeS. The new reality needs to be an individual (machine) that needs to constantly replace its story.

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[56] René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel,* trans. Yvonne Freccero, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1966, p.65.

[57] John Lye, "Some Attributes of Modernist Literature", www.brocku.ca/english/courses/2F55/modernism, 2008.

This formulation of the novel, then, has at its centre the notion of repetition. This notion has also been formally adopted by theorists of modernism. It has been argued that the "specificity [of modernism] lies in the recognition that the conventions of art needed constant renewal, a sort of permanent revolution, to borrow a phrase from the political world".[58] Leigh Wilson goes further when she claims that: "The sense that the novel needed to be renewed and transformed is *the* unifying element in modernist fiction."[59] This means, of course, that the "new" is what makes the literature modern; that experimentation is synonymous with the modernist novel. A writer has a choice. If they want to be modern then they have to be new in some way but, obviously, if they do not want to be modern they can continue to write within pre-existent conventions. ESDeS is different from both of these positions. It needs repetition but not in the sense of "constant renewal". It needs repetition as an evolutionary essential. Every time existential awareness becomes foregrounded – at the point of recognition - a new cover story (or project) is needed. This new story need not be "transformation". It can be either a reformation of an old story or a genuine new story. In either case repetition is essential. Charlie Marlow's telling of the story of Kurtz to his listeners on the *Nellie* is adopting the reformulation form of repetition (see chapter 4). When he tells the story of Powell in *Chance* he may be said to be more properly creating a genuinely new story (see chapter 5). Certainly Lodge in *Thinks* is definitely telling a genuinely new story (see chapter 6).

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[58] Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism,* p. 5.

[59] Wilson, *Modernism*, p. 75.

In telling an ESDeS there needs, necessarily, to be a separation of the paradoxical idea, not-p from its p. This could be described as a division into two, a binary opposition or a janus-face but none of these are what is meant by an ESDeS split. Jekyll and Hyde may represent the classic division between good and evil. This is not what is meant by the ESDeS split. Poststructuralism also adopts the term division, not so much as a split but as a technique: the "tendency to reverse the polarity of common binary oppositions"[60] in order to uncover or generate new possible interpretations. This has become a classic research tool. Watts, for example, lists several oppositions including "Awareness is better than unawareness"[61] to guide his reading of *Heart of Darkness*. Certainly the privileging of no meaning over meaning leads to ESDeS but nevertheless this is not what ESDeS means by split. It has also become generally desirable for a new critical approach to adopt a binary opposition approach in its attempt to seek a new interpretation. Bernard Paris provides a specific illustration of this approach with an interesting slant on the character-plot dichotomy. He claims that "the usual practice has been to see Marlow [in *Heart of Darkness*] as a literary device…[whereas]…I believe that Marlow is Conrad's finest character creation and one of the most remarkable psychological portraits in literature".[62] Further this oppositional approach has entered the general consciousness. Whatever actual authors intend by their work there is a predilection on behalf of the reader to elicit a binary opposition. The bibliographic entry for Tim Armstrong's *Modernism: A Cultural History*

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60 Barry, *Beginning Theory*, p. 74.

61 Cedric Watts, *Conrad's Heart of Darkness: A Critical and Contextual Discussion*, Milan: Mursi Internationsl, 1977, p. 4.

62 Bernard J. Paris, *Conrad's Charlie Marlow: A New Approach to "Heart of Darkness" and Lord Jim*, New York: Palgrave, 2005, p. viii.

provides a good example. It *claims* the book takes the conventionally held view, expressed by Lewis above, that modernism "challenged established authorities" and then reverses it by claiming it "portrays modernism less as a movement in revolt from the modern world as attempting to engage with the world".[63] However, neither the reality nor the implied reality is what is meant by the ESDeS use of split either. A final very pertinent example should make this difference even clearer. The end of the nineteenth century saw the "discovery of Nietzsche"[64] and Franz Kuna claims:

> It is the modern novel which has embodied most eagerly Nietzsche's formula of the 'Janus face' of modern man, who is doomed to exist tragically. The attempt to absorb and distil such a view of human existence has tended to make the modern novel itself Janus-faced and paradoxical, and to make many modern writers employ tragic or tragic-comic myths as the underlying pattern of plots in their work.[65]

He describes what the image means to him in respect of *Heart of Darkness* which he sees, in Nietzschean terms, as the exploration of a territory "beyond good and evil".[66] Kuna spells out what the metaphor is supposed to mean: "On the one side [of the face] is Kurtz… the idealist….On the other side the members of the Eldorado Exploring Company [representing Europe], sordid profiteers and reckless exploiters."[67] The Janus face consists of Dionysius and Apollo. The first side is "the primordial" one which represents a man "aware of the illusionary nature of his

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63 Tim Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History*, Cambridge: Polity, 2005. Bibliographic entry.

64 Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism*, p. 443.

65 Franz Kuna, "The Janus-faced novel: Conrad, Musil, Kafka, Mann" in Bradbury and McFarlane, (eds) *Modernism,* p. 444.

66 Ibid., p. 447.

67 Ibid.

existence".[68] The second side manifests itself as "rapt vision and delightful illusion".[69] Kuna then represents Marlow as the "mediator between the two".[70] The description of the split comes very close to representing the view of ESDeS. It fails because it is in essence describing a society view rather that an individual view: as an optional and mutually exclusive choice. When he describes Marlow as a mediator he means within a realist framework. Marlow is seen as really trying to choose between two ways of life, neither of which is grounded in an absolute morality. In principle Nietzsche would like to dispose of Apollo and leave Dionysius in charge. The overt plot cannot decide. It leaves Dionysius behind in the Jungle and it restores Apollo to reassert order in Europe. If Marlow is a mediator it is not clear, on this analysis, what his mediation achieves other than a view that Europeans should stay at home. Again, this is not what is meant by ESDeS's division into two. Dionysius may represent existential angst but the illusion contained within Apollo is not ESD. Both these alternatives exist within the telling. It is not so much a split as an **interpretation**; just another way of digging out meaning when there appears to be none. The reading recognises existential angst and illusion but cannot make the **choice**; it does not conceive of a hiding mechanism. This type of reading is revisited in more detail in the analysis of *Strait is the Gate* in the next chapter.

The final "detail" to be looked at is perhaps the most crucial for ESDeS theory after the notion of hiding or covert plotting. It revolves around the concept

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[68] Ibid., p. 445.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid., p. 447.

of interpretation. The idea has insinuated itself into all the discussion so far listed in this chapter. Pericles Lewis foregrounds it for modernism: "One of the distinctive characteristics of the late nineteenth-century crisis of reason was the development of a new attitude towards interpretation...in which the apparent, or manifest, meaning of an idea or a text is thought to need decoding in order to discover another hidden, or latent, meaning."[71] Frank Kermode also relies heavily on this idea which informs the discussion of the "First Story" in the next chapter.[72] Certainly it is a fact that the concept of modernism leads to a never-ending debate which has "continually expanded in scope"[73] and "still dominates the catalogues of academic publishers".[74] Morag Shiach essentially explains why this is so when she notes that "no one technique or style defines a novel as modernist".[75] This lack of certainty about the meaning of the concept must inevitably lead to the open-endedness which is one of its defining characteristics. Wilson emphasises the same point: "not only *what* modernism is, but *when* has been a matter of persistent debate for literary critics."[76] Further, not only is the debate between critics it is also within a critic. Malcolm Bradbury seems to be unable to decide whether the change to modernism was gradual or sudden. At times he champions the former: "it is possible to discern its [modernism's] origins long before we see its fruition"[77] and sometimes the latter: "we have…increasingly come to believe that this new art

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71 Lewis, *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism,* p. 18.

72 See Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979.

73 Ibid., p. xvii.

74 Wilson, *Modernism*, p. 124.

75 Morag Shiach, *The Cambridge Companion to the Modernist Novel,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

76 Wilson, *Modernism*, p. 3.

77 、 Bradbury and McFarlane, *Modernism*, p. 29.

comes from, or is, an upheaval of the third and cataclysmic order."[78] What is undecided and open-ended then invites more debate. More recent works have continued to explore the subject and have looked at almost every aspect of life in an attempt to incorporate them under the umbrella of modernism. Tim Armstrong notes that: "Recent surveys of modernism by Levinson, Nicholls and others have continued to be preoccupied with modernism's own fascination with literary genealogy."[79] Morag Shiach looks at *Modernism, Labour and Selfhood in British Literature and Culture, 1890-1930*. Rachel Potter looks at the relationship between modernism and politics.[80] She argues that originally modernists were hostile to modern democracies despite advocating the individual but the relationship between writing and politics has shifted. Paul Wake, despite the innumerable available readings of Conrad, still feels able to add "there is an emerging consensus that the 'centre' of the novel [*Chance*] is…gender".[81] The same continual re-interpretation of novels also applies to novelists. Henry James, who is considered by Bradbury to be one of the first modernist writers, still induces an immense volume of criticism from each "successive wave of theoretical and critical practice – New Criticism, deconstruction, feminism, Marxism, New Historicism".[82]

Interpretation then is seen as crucial for modernist criticism. However, this is not what ESDeS means by interpretation. This thesis asserts that each new

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78 Ibid., p. 19.
79 Armstrong, *Modernism: A Cultural History*, p. x.
80 Potter, *Modernism and Democracy*.
81 Paul Wake, *Conrad's Marlow: Narrative and Death in "Youth", "Heart of Darkness",* Lord Jim *and* Chance*,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 110.
82 David Kurnick, "What Does Jamesian Style Want?", *The Henry James Review* 28.3 (2007), pp. 213-222.

interpretation, uncovered by a new reader, is related to the overt plotting and that it shows no obvious interest at all in covert plotting. The new interpreters are doing what Shoshana Felman argues critics often do: "the critical interpretation, in other words, not only elucidates the text but also reproduces it dramatically, unwittingly participates in it."[83] Criticism, in other words, identifies with the modernist text in the need for the new: that is, it cooperates with the purpose of the text. It also, however, cooperates, albeit inadvertently, with the ESDeS text. The net result of all the work filling the publishers' lists is that it can be (re)asserted with confidence that, if it is in the nature of covert plotting to stay hidden, the modernist agenda has colluded with this underlying and more fundamental purpose too. The reader is so busy interpreting the overt that they have no time for the covert.

It only now remains to develop a means of locating an ESDeN. Locating a modernist novel seems fraught with difficulty and likely to lead to disagreements. In contrast, an ESDeN, when found, will not lead to disagreement: it is a relatively easy empirical task to ascertain whether or not it contains a covert plot. As it happens, finding an ESDeN in the first place is also relatively easy.

The strong version of the narrative-consciousness-view of mind argues that there is no separation between an internal being or teller of the story and the story itself: the story *is* consciousness. Narrative-consciousness theory regards the consciousness as a story-telling machine. This remains true if the story is in novel

[83] Shoshana Felman, "Turning the Screw of Interpretation", in S. Felman (ed.), *Literature and Psychoanalysis. The Question of Reading Otherwise*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987, p. 101.

form. *Heart of Darkness*, in this strong version of the theory, *is* Conrad and the characters in the story, Marlow, Kurtz and the Intended, are aspects of the narrative-consciousness called "Conrad". A weaker version would argue that the story presented in novel form offers an example or image of the story creation technique in use by a particular narrative-consciousness: that, since the story that *is* consciousness will necessarily contain a means of disguising existential futility it is possible that the novel will use the same techniques: not essential but possible. The possibility in itself will result in some ESDeNs but this thesis goes further and asserts that the possibility is raised to a probability if the authors are, before embarking on the overt project of writing a novel, able to satisfy some conditions. ESDeS authors will have reached a stage of awareness that existential futility is a self-evident fact and do not like it. They will have come to ask themselves, "What is the use of being a little boy if you are going to grow up to be a man."[84] They will be representatives of the middle term in a continuum which spans absolute certainty of meaning to absolute absence of meaning. They will be writers who are generally regarded as autobiographical in the sense that they use their own "real life" experiences and emotions directly in their fictional texts. They will be writers who are in the midst of their own self-deceptive crises. Knowledge of all of these conditions is extra to the actual text. It is not necessary. It just speeds up a search. In short: if the narrative-consciousness is an ESDeS then it seems likely that the written story will be an ESDeN.

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[84] Gertrude Stein, *The Geographical History of America*, London: Vintage Books, 1973, p. 59.

In a way, the adoption of this policy goes against one of the touchstones of late twentieth-century theory by reinventing the author. This is not totally original. It merely returns to the view espoused by Empson in "Using Biography" in which he claims anybody who ignores the author shows "a great failure to grasp the whole situation".[85] It may be true that the intention of the writer cannot be inferred from the text any more than it can necessarily be inferred from any other of their behaviours but this is no reason not to use author input given directly. In the following chapter 4 on *Heart of Darkness*, for instance, Conrad provides a very clear hint that the key to understanding the work lies in the codicil and this leads to a positive critical interpretation of the work as a whole. However, the thesis does not need to go even so far at this stage. It will only retreat from the concept of "no author - only text" on a temporary basis: just long enough to observe that it is a reasonable assertion that Gide, James and Conrad, as the exemplars adopted by this thesis, have all seen the "Horror!" and are all autobiographical authors as described above briefly and in more detail below.[86] It is also a reasonable assumption that they were all acting-out self-deceptions at the times they wrote the works included in this thesis and that they wrote their works as a means of coming to terms with the paradoxical dilemmas in which they found themselves. In Conrad's case, as the thesis's primary exemplar, there are further suggestive aspects in his interest in existential questions and his liking for using a mixture of genres.

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[85] William Empson, *Using Biography*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1984, p. vii.

[86] Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* can also be matched to his autobiographical *Confessions*. The hypothesis is bi-directional. If a story containing a covert plot is found, by chance, then it can be inferred that its author was existentially aware at the time of its writing.

Gide's *Strait is the Gate* has many autobiographical references and was written by an author who was probably chronically self-deceptive. Anthony Palmer says: "Self-deception is a persistent theme in the work of André Gide … [and *Strait is the Gate*] … is a striking illustration."[87] It is known, for example, that the overt plot of the novella is virtually identical to Gide's own young life. The fictional story tells of the unrequited relationship between two young people, Jerome and Alissa. It is "the unassuaged memory of Gide's unsuccessful wooing of his cousin between 1888 and 1891".[88] His own father too died whilst he was young and he too spent holidays with his real three cousins supposedly preferring the younger girl, Jeanne, but professing love for Madeleine who, like the Alissa of the novel, was two years older. Many of the crucial scenes are direct borrowings: Painter describes one New Year as follows: it is a virtual replica of Jerome's experience with Alissa:

> The New Year was spent as usual at Rouen with his cousins. Madeleine had grown, matured beyond her years by a hidden grief, and the discovery of her secret was the chief event of André's early years, a revelation which altered the whole course of his life. He returned one evening from visiting Uncle Emile's family, and finding his mother not yet home, decided to go back and take his cousins by surprise. No one was about. He stole upstairs to Madeleine's room, and found her kneeling at her bedside, in tears. "I felt that all my life and all my love would be needed to cure the enormous, intolerable sorrow which dwelt in her. I had discovered the mystic orientation of my life." Madeleine's burden was indeed heavy for a girl so young and pure: she must bear the knowledge of her mother's infidelity, a secret which all Rouen knew and laughed about, and only her father and sisters had not yet discovered.[89]

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87 Palmer, "Characterising Self-deception", p. 51.

88 George D Painter, *André Gide - A Critical Biography*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968, p. 58.

89 Ibid., p.19-20.

Like Alissa's mother, Madeleine's mother fled, soon after, with her lover. Gide did not just use autobiographical material for convenience; he is known to have written novels in order to convey messages. He says of *The Immoralist*, for example, "there, but for the grace of God, go I".[90] This sentiment might equally apply to *Strait is the Gate.* Gide "invents, therefore, characters who will take [his] ideas to the lengths he wishes to push them to, while, he, Gide, stands back and watches".[91] In the case of Jerome and Alissa, the characters and their concerns are reflections of himself and his concerns. Just as their two stories given separately add up to the text as a whole, the two in "each other" become just one self: divided, and the question becomes (once again) not what the text tells (for what it tells is a "mirage"[92]) but what it is hiding.

There are two possibilities for this: a normal or an existential-self-deception. The first is a possibility since the only significant deviations from the transfer of facts from his own narrative-consciousness into the novella are that in real life Gide succeeds in marrying his Madeleine, although it is said that the marriage was never consummated for Gide openly professed his homosexuality. The second is also a possibility. Alissa discovers "the existential void at the heart of human reality".[93] This is an opinion which derives directly from Gide himself: "Certainly Gide was to be increasingly concerned with the fundamental gratuitousness of human endeavour

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90 Ibid., p. 58.
91 David Walker, *André Gide*, London: Macmillan, 1990, p.23.
92 André Gide, *Strait is the Gate,* London: Penguin, 1952, p. 81.
93 Walker, *André Gide*, p. 42.

and the consequent difficulty in grounding moral choices, and in this respect was a precursor of Sartre and Camus."[94]

James uses autobiographical material too. Leon Edel recounts countless examples: "Henry James had written two tales whose pages are filled with personal history."[95] His characters are said to "all sound like one another and their creator",[96] suggesting very directly that his narratives are simply examples of his own narrative-consciousness. When he is said, for example,[97] to present the tale *What Maisie Knew* (1897) through two points of view, those of Maisie and Mrs Wix, it might be better regarded as a split in narrative-consciousness. Certainly Maisie is split. At the beginning she "was divided in two"[98] and at the end "the child stood there again dropped and divided".[99] "The young girl, Maisie, becomes", as Barbara Eckstein argues, "through her learned vision, the man, the artist, Henry James."[100]

Prior to writing *What Maisie Knew*, "during the five years from 1890 to the beginning of 1895, James devoted himself to the writing of plays"[101] and succeeded in putting on two, *The American* and *Guy Domville.* Neither was artistically or

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94 Ibid., p. 42.
95 Leon Edel, *The Treacherous Years*, London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969, p. 89.
96 Kurnick, "What Does Jamesian Style Want?", pp. 213-222.
97 Juliet Mitchell, "What Maisie Knew: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Girl", in John Goode (ed.), *The Air of Reality*, London: Methuen and Co, 1972, p. 169.
98 Henry James. *What Maisie Knew*, London: Penguin, 1985, p. 35.
99 Ibid., p. 261.
100 Barbara Eckstein, "Unsquaring the Squared Route of What Maisie Knew", in N. Cornwell and M. Malone (eds), *The Turn of the Screw and What Maisie Knew*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998, p. 179.
101 Leon Edel. *The Life of Henry James, Vol. 2*, London: Penguin, 1977, p. 16.

financially successful and he was a booed off the stage after the first night of the latter. After failure as a commercial playwright, and his humiliation at the hands of the audience, the post-*Domville* James should be interesting for he very clearly fell into a deeply depressive state: "He was in mourning for himself, for his dead self, who had floundered and struggled when the waters of disaster closed over his head."[102] James would have had to reorganise his psyche. He did so by deliberately using his writing. This is why studying his writing during the immediate post-*Domville* period is likely to be so revealing. Edel thinks so. He regards his volume, *The Treacherous Years,* as focussing on "the novelist's spiritual illness between 1895 and the beginning of the new century and describes how he rids himself of his private demons by writing about them".[103] Edel adds: "At the moment of defeat Henry James seized the skill of his 'technique' as if it were a life belt."[104] The life belt is a perfect metaphor for self-deception. It is the only thing that keeps the wearer afloat and prevents drowning. More, self-deception is to be represented by "technique". It only remains to be said that he did recover and that he did so by burying his humiliation: "I take up my old pen again. I have only to face my problems. xxxxx But all that is of the ineffable – too deep and pure for any utterance. Shrouded in sacred silence let it rest xxxxx."[105]

Gérard Jean-Aubry in *The Sea Dreamer* argues that no other work is more autobiographical than *Heart of Darkness* and he makes this point repeatedly: "He

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102 Edel, The *Treacherous Years*, p. 85.
103 Ibid., p. 9.
104 Ibid., p. 101.
105 Leon Edel and Lyall H. Powers (eds), *Henry James, The Complete Notebooks*, New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1987, Jan 23rd, 1895, p. 109. The XXXs are in the original.

[Conrad] was in exactly the same situation as Marlow, the narrator of 'Heart of Darkness'"; "Marlow, who is Conrad himself"; "From 'Heart of Darkness,' which parallels Conrad's own life at this period."[106] Certainly, the two stories are alike in many respects. To give the flavour, a few examples are given.[107] All of these examples are abstracted from Jean-Aubry's account of Conrad's life in *The Sea Dreamer* where quotes from the *Heart of Darkness* and Conrad's diaries are so intermingled it is hard to make out which is which. Jean-Aubry shows that both Conrad and Marlow were ship's captains and both were out of work for a long time before "[Conrad] suddenly took it into his head to command one of the little steamboats of the Upper Congo",[108] as does Marlow. Both obtained employment from a Brussels based company:

> And then Marlow gives his unforgettable account of his visit to the company's office. The women dressed in black, knitting in the outer office like impassive Fates; the huge, many-coloured map of Central Africa; the interview with the managing director which lasted only a few seconds; the compassionate secretary; the visit to the doctor; the farewells to his aunt this succession of details and scenes, all extraordinarily vivid and all bearing the imprint of a biting irony, are *nothing but the memory of actuality*.[109]

Both have a long and difficult trip to the home port of the Upper Congo flotilla. Both make a long trip, in both time and distance, to the Central Station with the same purpose, "to relieve one of the company's agents… whose health was causing the greatest anxiety".[110] Both succeed in relieving the agent - called Klein in real

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106 Gérard Jean-Aubry, *The Sea Dreamer*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957.
107 Abstracted from many more from ibid., pp. 150-176.
108 Ibid., p. 154.
109 Ibid., p. 160. My emphasis.
110 Ibid., p. 169.

life and Kurtz in the book[111] - only to see him die on the journey home. Conrad himself, as does Marlow, becomes ill on his return to Europe and has to spend a long time convalescing and, according to Jean-Aubry, "From now on he always felt threatened."[112]

James was probably only in normal-self-deception and therefore did not write ESDeSs. Gide's position was more ambiguous: after all normal and existential-self-deceptions are not mutually exclusive. However, Conrad was undoubtedly capable of ESD: his concerns were much longer lasting and deeper. Jean-Aubry's biography is replete with both atmosphere and concrete statements. The latter is exemplified in the following collection of quotations from his work. Jean-Aubry does not think it "altogether correct"[113] that Conrad's experiences on the Congo "fastened a deep fitful gloom over his spirits".[114] He asserts instead that "this gloom was the very basis of his character".[115] The Congo experience, however, "did cause it to spring forth from the very depths of his being".[116] Jean-Aubry gives a reason for "gloom": the source of the "chronic melancholy [was] born of a constant and painful awareness of man's greatness and misery".[117] Jean-Aubry goes on to suggest that Conrad realised that the solution to his depressions "could only be found in action".[118] Ideally this would have been in his first profession for "only the sea could set him free from his doubts and his

111 Ibid., p. 170.
112 Ibid., p. 175.
113 Jean-Aubry, *The Sea Dreamer*, p. 176.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid., p. 185.
118 Ibid., p. 183.

depression"[119] but, when this proved impossible, he found another way: although "he looked at the pens with horror",[120] "he sought relief from his own troubles in narrating those of Almayer".[121]

However, these biographical detours are indicative only. Individual factors will then emerge from preliminary readings. Conrad has exhibited two other traits which are indicative. He can be shown to be concerned with existentialism and in creating a new genre. These two observations together put Conrad very insistently in the vanguard of ESDeS for they suggest that his oeuvre is very intentionally ESDeS. Bruce Johnson makes a strong case for the first. He devotes a whole chapter to what he calls "Existential models" in Conrad where he regards Conrad, as not unique, but "immersed in a Western tradition"[122] which is established around the concept of "nothingness".[123] Furthermore since this thesis is trying to justify ESDeS as a new genre it is pertinent that Johnson regarded this approach as almost a genre in its own right: "there was a widespread taste for stories about colonial whites",[124] the essence of which revolved around stories where whites were "tempted to play God"[125] but where the plotting was followed into "metaphysical regions".[126] In addition, others have more specifically picked up on Conrad's

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119 Ibid., p. 182.

120 Taken from a letter to Madame Poradowska Aug. 26, 1891, in Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (eds), *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Volume 1, 1861-1897*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 91, and quoted in ibid., p. 182.

121 Jean-Aubry, *The Sea Dreamer*, p. 182.

122 Bruce Johnson, *Conrad's Models of Mind*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971, p. 93.

123 Ibid., p. 93.

124 Ibid.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid., p. 94.

interest in genre. Cedric Watts notes that *Heart of Darkness* is "enriched and modified by…folk-tale, legend and literary tradition generally".[127] Jakob Lothe, more recently, makes the same point: "Conrad's *Lord Jim* appropriates and cumulatively combines aspects of other subgenres of fiction." He lists "the sketch, the tale, the fragment, the episode, the legend, the letter, the romance, and the parable".[128] J. H. Stape argues that Conrad's autobiographical volume *A Personal Record* "has a peculiar status, in this canon "since it amalgamates both autobiography and epic".[129] Cedric Watts argues that it also embraces melodrama. He notes that there is interchange between fact and fiction: that Conrad describes a smuggling incident twice: once in the autobiographical *The Mirror of the* Sea and once in a fictional narrative *The Arrow of Gold.* He notes "the striking difference between the two accounts is the autobiographical version gives a fuller, more dramatic, more fully characterised and explanatory sequence of events…than does the less eventful and less ironic account in *The Arrow of Gold*".[130] None of these observations specifically mention the detective genre as such nor do they do so, in particular, in the context of either *Heart of Darkness* or *Chance*. However, other critics have been fond of using a detective metaphor to give meaning to *Heart of Darkness*. Peter Brooks, for example, argues that "the detective story may…lay bare the structure of any narrative, particularly its claim to be a retracing of events

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127 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 75. He, in particular, gives a Faustian interpretation and a romantic double interpretation.

128 Jakob Lothe, "Conrad's *Lord Jim*: Narrative and Genre" in Jakob Lothe, Jeremy Hawthorn, and James Phelan (eds), *Joseph Conrad: Voice, Sequence, History, Genre,* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008, p. 236.

129 .J. H. Stape, "Narrating Identity in *A Personal Identity*", in Lothe, Hawthorn, and Phelan, (eds), *Joseph Conrad,* p. 218.

130 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 146.

that have already occurred".[131] Susan Jones picks up on the detective genre idea specifically with respect to *Chance*. She suggests it draws on "a number of sub-genres: the romance…the detective novel".[132] This will be a particularly fruitful road to go down and will be followed in chapter 5 where it will be shown that the overt telling in *Chance* does not demand this type of critical approach but adopting it does enable a significant advance to be made to the narrative-consciousness theory.

Following the detour into the psyches of the authors, the thesis will now return to their recorded texts. It will discuss and then eliminate precursor texts in chapter 3 and in so doing establish the parts of the continuum taxonomy from Story-1 to Story-2 and from Story-2 to Story-3. It will then, in chapter 4, attack the central section of the continuum, Story-2, with an analysis of *Heart of Darkness*, which reveals the new genre, ESDeS, to perfection. It reveals what Johnson calls "the original project of the *individual*, a free *choice* in his manner of being"[133] and what this thesis calls the covert plot representing the evolutionary necessity to keep existential angst at bay.

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131 Brooks, *Reading for the Plot,* p. 73.

132 Susan Jones, *Conrad and Women*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1999, p.66 quoted in Wake, *Conrad's Marlow*, p. 115.

133 Johnson, *Conrad's Models of Mind*, p. 103. My emphases.

Chapter 3

The Provenance of the theory II: A Further Elaboration of the Existentially-Self-Deceptive-Narrative-Consciousness Theory.

The previous chapter identified a narrative type that was sufficiently different from other types to deserve a specific genre category. The difference lies in its motivation. The telling of the actual story has a primary and prior purpose to accommodate existential awareness which is, as Lodge points out, "one of the things that distinguishes human beings from every other kind of life on earth…we know we are going to die."[1] The chapter also suggested that, as a matter of logic this accommodation could take three forms, excluding physical suicide. This chapter will look at selected stories and novels in some detail in order to give more substance to the nature of the story-continuum. The **First-Story** and Story-1 define the beginning of the continuum where there is a collective story and a collective defence. Then, as:

> Watt observed…whereas narrative literature usually recycled familiar stories, novelists were the first storytellers to pretend that their stories had never been told before, that they were entirely new and unique, as is each of our own lives according to the empirical, historical, and individualistic concept of human life.[2]

Now, along with the individual stories there needed to be individual defences. This is what is meant by Story-2 or the ESDeN. This clearly did not happen decisively: it emerged. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1887), *Strait is the Gate*, James's oeuvre between 1892-1903 and Conrad's *Almayer's Folly* (1895) nibble around the front

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1 David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel,* London: Secker and Warburg, 2003, p. 25.
2 Ibid., p. 39.

edges of the ESDeN proper. Similarly, Henry Green's *Party Going* (1939) does the same at the back end of the ESDeN, suggesting that a Story-3, in which the human organism lives with the awareness of death, is possible but unlikely. Placing the ESDeN in a continuum of related terms, as was done with the concept of self-deception, provides understanding of what is required by an actual ESDeN in a Saussurean or Wittgensteinian sort of way and prepares the way for a full analysis of an actual ESDeN, given in chapter 4, with the reading of *Heart of Darkness.*

The First-Story

The nature of the narrative-consciousness theory demands that the First-Story needs to be based on the pre-existing self-deception-theory. It will always involve religion but Story-1 will be culturally dependent. That is, the religious story will be similar in purpose everywhere but will have different content. This thesis has chosen the Christian Bible story purely as a matter of convenience.

Dawkins invokes the same "ubiquitous argument" with respect to religion that this thesis has used for self-deception. He notes that "we observe large numbers of people – in many areas it amounts to 100 per cent – who hold beliefs that flatly contradict demonstrable scientific facts as well as religions followed by others"[3] and infers that it must have an evolutionary purpose. The evolutionary argument demands, as has already been argued, a selective advantage. At first sight this is not apparent, for religion is extremely wasteful of time and energy in exactly

[3] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, London: Bantam Press, 2006, p. 173.

the same way as storytelling seems to be wasteful. Believers, it would seem, are unlikely to have a survival advantage: time spent praying in church could be better employed in the propagation of their genes. Dawkins notes, however, that one reason used to justify religion is the explanatory one: "Historically, religion aspired to explain our own existence and the nature of the universe in which we find ourselves."[4] Robert Park affirms this, probably generally held, view: "Creation myths sought to explain where humans came from."[5] Dawkins, however, discounts the argument as unsatisfactory on its own: "The Darwinian still wants to know why?"[6] in the sense of, "what is its selective advantage?"

This thesis is suggesting an answer. It might be that religion was homo-sapiens's early exploration of this question that led to a religious solution mediated by gods. Genesis is truly the beginning in the sense that it is an example of the first attempt at such an explanation. As such, it is commendable. The god answer is functional in that it puts off the need for an answer to the future – that is, the next life. Once this is done other things or projects can be adopted. The god answer, however, comes first. It is a higher level of explanation than the others. The others are not needed in the absence of the first. It is necessary to stress the importance of this deduction. What comes first, along with language and intelligence and consciousness, is recognition of existential futility. Existential futility is not an idea developed relatively recently but an idea that has always existed as part of the

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4 Ibid., p.347.

5 Robert L. Park, *Superstition: Belief in the age of Science,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, p. 28.

6 Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, p. 169.

concept of being human. Right from the dawn of mankind there have been two drives: one to propagate life (the selfish gene) and one to do away with it (based on the awareness of existential futility). Since it is, de facto, obvious that the first drive is more successful, this thesis has suggested that the second drive has been mitigated by using the skill of self-deceiving. This "skill", then, has been put to a universal purpose to create a "self" that rejects existential death. The ability will have evolved just as any other mechanism will have evolved. So, religion, used in this way, is not a mere by-product. It was essential for everyone. It is not an answer to the question of why are we here at all. It is, assuming the pre-existing awareness of futility, to *disguise* this knowledge. A story was needed by everyone and it is reasonable to suppose that the same story – religion – was, at one time, used by everyone. Its very common existence today is simply because it remains a good disguise. The only difference is that now it is just one of an armoury of disguises.

Dawkins, in addition to the ubiquity of religion, introduces other interesting ideas which can be co-opted by the self-deception-narrative-consciousness theory. What follows is a brief look at the most relevant two.

(i) Give Me Your Children – The Parent-Child Mechanism

Dawkins reiterates a well known assertion: "Natural selection builds child brains with a tendency to believe whatever their parents and tribal elders tell them."[7] The reason for this is obvious. "Playing with fire" is dangerous and it is more efficient

[7] Ibid., p. 176.

not to do it because of cultural taboos than to learn by trial and error. Dawkins argues that it is because of this "inbuilt" mechanism that "belief" is transmitted so effectively. This mechanism does not explain the origins of belief but it does explain why, once belief is established, it will continue. Because of this **parent-child mechanism** large numbers of people will never have experienced awareness of existential futility. The experience will be pre-empted by the childhood experience. From now on the parent-child mechanism is used synonymously with the self-deceptive-process.

(ii) Dennett's Predictive Model

Fingarette's spelling-out behaviourist model has been preferred to the metaphorical space idea of consciousness. Here too a behaviourist approach has descriptive advantages. Dawkins concurs with the view already expressed in the introduction that the ability to predict the behaviour of other entities in the world is important for survival. Dennett builds on this and suggests a "three way classification of the 'stances' that are adopted by people in trying to understand the behaviour of entities such as animals, machines or each other".[8] The three stances are physical, design and intentional. The physical is the psychological equivalent of cause and effect. It always works in principle, but it can take too long so the next two stances are shortcuts. The design stance makes the assumption that an entity is designed, and the intentional stance goes one better and assumes "an agent, indeed a rational agent, who harbours beliefs and desires and other mental states that exhibit

[8] Ibid., p. 182.

intentionality or 'aboutness,' and whose actions can be explained (or predicted) on the basis of the content of these states".[9] Dawkins gives the example of an attacking tiger. He argues that when it is observed that "that cat intends to eat you"[10] it would be foolish to consider the physics of its molecules or the design of its teeth or claws, it is best to "cut to the intentional chase".[11] Failure to do so and act accordingly will result in natural selecting-out. This is merely another way of arguing that human behaviour incorporates a "drive" to give meaning. Here is another example.

> A boy knocked his foot against a small stump of wood in the centre of bush path, a frequent happening in Africa, and suffered pain and inconvenience in consequence.…He declared that witchcraft had made him knock his foot against the stump.…He agreed that witchcraft had nothing to do with the stump of wood being in his path but added that he had kept his eyes open for stumps, as indeed every Zande does most carefully, and that if he had not been bewitched he would have seen the stump.[12]

The boy, in order to explain the unexpected or the unusual, invents the idea of witches. Where there seems to be no apparent physical cause to explain the event and the complete lack of design, the Zande has recourse to the short cut of intent. Somebody must have done something. The idea that humans desire to make sense of life crosses cultural boundaries although the idea of witches may not. A person, in effect, generally explains an event in terms of cause and effect but in the absence of a clear cause uses instead another power. The alternatives are just names serving as explanations. In this particular case the assigning of a "real" agent, as an

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9 Daniel Dennett, *Consciousness Explained,* London: Penguin, 1993, p. 76.
10 Ibid., p. 182.
11 Ibid.
12 E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *The Rationality of Magic,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937, p. 65.

explanation, is false, not because there is no "real" agent but because it does not have predictive power. If the same idea were to work elsewhere, as Eco says it must in reading, then it is a useful idea for it provides an explanation for what differentiates self-deception as a mechanism from unconscious motivation. The story told, with intention, provides within the text the materials to predict the outcome. Intention, described in this way, might appear to be more a property of the reader who picks up the clues and makes the predictions, rather than the teller. Cedric Watts, when discussing covert plotting, argues that:

> it is critically sterile to attempt to distinguish between conscious and unconscious intentions [referring to the author], but critically fruitful to distinguish between imaginative intention and the want of it. [The rule is] an apparently anomalous part of a text is imaginatively intentional if predictions made by the reader on the assumption of its intentionality are fulfilled.[13]

However, the written story does have, in fact, a teller: the author or machine. It is a matter of choice whether extra-textual material from this source is used by the reader to augment their enjoyment. This thesis chooses to do just this with, in particular, its analysis of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* Nevertheless it has been noted that self-deception actually lies with neither one nor the other: it involves the space between the teller and the hearer and this will become an essential distinction for the narrative-consciousness theory. This will be given the term collusion and will receive full elucidation in the chapter on *Heart of Darkness*. Ultimately intention and collusion will be seen to be bi-directional: the one implies the other.

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[13] Cedric Watts, *The Deceptive Text: An Introduction to Covert Plots*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984, p.15.

The essential framework of the process of narration within the ESDeN, which was incompletely itemised above, can now be completed:

- Consciousness is regarded as only a story and no more. In this thesis the story is given the special name, narrative-consciousness.
- The story has to make p *and* not-p available.
- The structure of the story is the separation, or split, of p and not-p: One story is immediately available on first reading and will be called the overt plot and the other is not and will be called the covert plot.
- The narrative allows the reader the possibility of predicting the presence of both plots and this is what is meant by intentional.
- The covert plot will prove to be collusive, and, therefore, its mere presence is taken as proof that the overall narrative-consciousness is intentional.

Story-1

The First-Story is the story of religion and it was generated at the origins of consciousness. It will not contain a covert plot for it is passed on through the parent-child mechanism and will be structured, therefore, on the self-deceptive-process. The nature of the existential threat to the continuation of life is such that the story will have to have been re-written periodically to defend consciousness from the re-emergence of the threat. That is, the "religion" story is just a story that gives meaning to a power outside of the individual. It will have had to have been regenerated many times. This thesis restricts itself, as a matter of convenience, to two of its later manifestations because, like Dawkins, they are the versions with which it happens to be most familiar. These are Judaism and Christianity. The Bible contains a collection of sacred texts including the story, told in the four

Gospels,[14] of Jesus's mission. This story is, in effect, the story of the transition from the older to the newer religion. Mark, in his version, took "the jumble of events that comprised Christ's life and fixed these events into some kind of biographical form".[15] His narrative might be given chapter headings as follows: Baptism, Wilderness, Ministry, Death and Resurrection.

A. N. Wilson points out that not much is known about the actual history of Jesus so he considers it a legitimate methodology to create his own storied version. His version is based on three observations. First, he states categorically that: "The gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke never state that Jesus claimed to be God."[16] The second observation follows from the first: Jesus was not a supernatural being. Third, Wilson believes that clues to the real life can be deduced by a close reading of the gospels which can't help leaking real life into the fictional story. These deductions give him the license, he believes, "to reconstruct, I hope plausibly, some picture of the historical Jesus".[17] Imitating this methodology, it is possible to construct yet another interpretation, based on the theory of narrative-consciousness*:* This version will include the same chapter headings but modified as follows:

(i) Baptism. A new sequence is about to start. The existing cover story is under threat.
(ii) Wilderness. the process and the point of recognition.
(iii) Ministry. process of narration.

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[14] There are of course many others including the version relating to Judas but this is an unnecessary complication. The story in the Bible is the version that has been accepted by most.

[15] Nick Cave, 'Introduction', *The Gospel According to Mark: Authorised King James Version*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 1998, p. viii. Note also that it really does start with the baptism. Not the birth. Matthew adds the birth and Luke further adds the boyhood.

[16] A. N. Wilson, *Jesus*, London: Flamingo, 1993, p. 110. Wilson repeats this over and over again. See p. 57 for another example.

[17] Ibid., p, xiii.

(iv) Death. point of narration.
(v) Resurrection. new cover story (put) in place.

What is certain is that at the beginning a cover story is in place – the monotheistic God of the Jews. What is equally certain is that for some this is not adequate and is replaced, at the end, with another cover story – the Trinitarian God of Pauline Christians.

(i) Cover Story in Place

The story of narrative-consciousness must contain two significant entities: a representation of not-p, existential awareness which causes emotional angst and an attitudinal "life is not worth living" and a representation of p, the opposite, happiness and the view "life is worth living". Initially the paradox is in a position of resolution. The Judaic God is foregrounded as the cover story and its not-p is buried.

The initial relevant death is the Baptism of Jesus.[18] It gives a warning that a challenge (process of recognition) is about to take place. This, in turn, indicates a start to the repetitive cycle. A Baptism is, of course, representative of rebirth: the rite of the dying of one's old self: to be born anew.

[18] See Mark 1:9.

(ii) Process of Recognition

Mark then states: "And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness."[19] The text then tells how Jesus meets up with the devil who exposes him to a series of temptations and gives Jesus's responses to the temptations. The responses, the believer is told, lay the foundations for his coming ministry: namely he does not succumb to them but asserts, in each case, the power of his (supernatural) father, as: "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedth out of the mouth of God."[20] Unfortunately, the story in the Bible does not make sense – if tested against the reality principle. First, Jesus is alone in the wilderness and so it is not possible to know what happened. There can be no independent objective evidence. Second, he was reportedly without food - "he did eat nothing"[21] - for forty days.[22] He was reported as "hungered"[23] whereas, more realistically, he should have been dead or, at the very least, hallucinating.[24] If the latter, the second or third hand reports of the temptations offered to Jesus might be legitimately read in any way, with equal plausibility. The disciples, Wilson believes, should not be uncritically believed. They, he asserts, wrote their texts backwards: "The Gospels are not history-books. They are narratives framed by communities of believers who entertained certain beliefs about Jesus which they took for granted."[25] It follows

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19 Mark 1:12.
20 Matthew 4:4.
21 Luke 4:2.
22 Luke 4:2. (Matt 4:2 says "fasted forty days and forty nights".)
23 Luke 4:2.
24 If as always the New Testament is based on the Old then Exodus (Ex 34:28) goes even further: Moses was on Mount Sinai for "forty days and nights" and "he did neither eat bread, nor drink water".
25 Wilson, *Jesus,* p. xiv

that other alternative stories are possible.[26] The temptations in the wilderness are more economically explained as a testing of a god cover story.

Consider how the story is introduced. In Mark the reader is told "the spirit driveth him into the wilderness".[27] In Matthew this becomes: "Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness."[28] In Luke, this becomes "[he] was led by the spirit into the wilderness".[29] The reader has two choices: they can believe that the spirit is dissociated from the body - the necessary split condition for self-deception - or that the Trinity is already established and the spirit is just one aspect of the same narrative-mind which is telling another part what to do. In either case the actuality of a split has been established and the possibility of self-deception introduced. The story continues with the actual temptations. There are three of these. In Mark Jesus was merely "tempted of Satan".[30] In Matthew the order is stones, temple and kingdoms.[31] In Luke the order is stones, kingdoms and temple.[32] In attempting, like Wilson, to construct a "historical picture" a non-supernatural being might consider what they would do under the same circumstances. Suppose that, after forty days without food, the power to turn stones into bread was on offer? The survivors of the Chilean air crash were happy to eat human flesh so there is little doubt that an ordinary person would eat bread. It is certain "that man shall not live

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26 Wilson gives his account of it in ibid., pp. 110-112. The account amounts to a claim that Jesus was advocating a rejection of a "collective response" in favour of an "individual" answer, albeit within the "protection of God".

27 Mark 1:12.

28 Matthew 4:1.

29 Luke 4:1.

30 Mark 1:13.

31 Matthew 4:3-11.

32 Luke 4:3-12.

by bread alone",[33] but nor shall he live without it. Miracles were, at one time, a serious part of religious belief[34] but they have, mostly, had to be dropped because they do not happen. Belief in a god who can suspend natural laws is not acceptable so, given the context of the "temptations in the wilderness" story, a real person most likely would find the cover story severely challenged. The second temptation offered to Jesus had relevance to "all the kingdoms of the world".[35] In Matthew these Satan "will give thee"[36] and in Luke, "All this power I will give thee."[37] Clearly this is a less universal choice than the desire for food to live. Some people might indeed sell their souls for power. Certainly most people appear to consider personal achievement important. A god who cannot facilitate personal projects might not be as attractive as one that could. The third temptation now becomes crucial.

(iii) Point of Recognition/Choice

Among its colloquial meanings, "being in the wilderness" means being depressed. In this specific case the suggestion is that Jesus's experience (like any other mortal placed in the same extreme position) had led him to the conclusion that there was no god; that man was alone; that he became existentially aware of the futility of life. At this point of choice, for a moment, Jesus would have decided life was not worth it. He would then be really tempted to end it all. This makes sense of his

33 Luke 4:4.
34 See J. C. A. Gaskin, "Hume on Religion", in David Fate Norton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hume*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.314.
35 Matthew 4:8 and Luke 4:5.
36 Matthew 4:8.
37 Luke 4:6.

climbing up to the top of the temple to consider the possibility of jumping off. Matthew hides the temple scenario by his ordering of the temptations but Luke lays it bare by making it the culmination of his story. Here, Jesus is taken to the "pinnacle of the temple" and invited to "cast thyself down from hence".[38] This is as clear a description that it is possible to give of the existential choice. In this instance Jesus rejects the "temptation" to jump off and kill himself and substitutes a project. He rejects suicide, and decides to put in place another cover story. The text immediately conceded that this is an existential self-deceptive choice for the last verse of the temptation chapter sums up: "And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him *for a season.*"[39] The text is aware that the cover story is just a temporary project.

(iv) Process of Narration

The chosen project is easy enough to state. It is a social work project: "to heal the broken hearted…to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."[40] It is clear from the birth of the Church that this *process* actually happened but there is a difference between stating that it happened and showing the mechanism of its happening. There are many other recorded cases where either evidence of a point of narration is given or a new cover story is put in place. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* is an example of the coping mechanism. Tolstoy expresses Ivan's project thus: "I have no doubt that there is

38 Luke 4:10.
39 Luke, 4:13. My emphasis.
40 Luke, 4:18.

truth in the teachings [of Christianity], but I also have no doubt that there is falsehood in them too, and that I must discover what is true and what is false and separate one from the other."[41] In short, the narrative-consciousness that is named Tolstoy divides itself into two: the real Tolstoy and the fictional Ivan. When Ivan dies he leaves the narrative-consciousness and takes angst with him. This makes it possible for Tolstoy to go on. Camus jumps to his point of narration too. He claims his Sisyphus sees the Universe "without a master… [as]…neither sterile nor futile" and is therefore "happy".[42] Dimmesdale does the same:

> "Do I feel joy again?" cried he, wondering at himself. "Methought the germ of it was dead in me! O Hester, thou art my better angel! I seem to have flung myself – sick, sin-stained, and sorrow blackened – down upon these forest leaves, and to have risen up all made anew, and with new powers to glorify Him that hath been merciful. This is already the better life. Why did we not find it sooner?"[43]

John Stuart Mill gives a description of a possible mechanism (now called a project): "They only are happy who have their minds fixed on some other object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others [like Tolstoy], on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit."[44] Joseph Conrad and Henry James, as has been seen, found their "other object" in their work. Cedric Watts claims Sartre adopted the same technique: "Writing was a therapy for Sartre, helping him to exorcise the hallucinations which troubled him in younger years."[45] Sartre also, in *Nausea*, has his hero Roquentin effectively do the same. Roquentin claims to be

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41 Leo Tolstoy, "A Confession", in *A Confession and Other Religious Writings,* trans. Jane Kentish, London: Penguin, 1987, p. 78

42 Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, London: Penguin, 1975, p.111.

43 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, London: Penguin, 1994, p. 172.

44 John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography*, New York: Signet Classics, p. 112.

45 Watts, *The Deceptive Text,* note 2, p. 195:

"an extreme philosophical rebel who truly believes that all is meaningless" whilst showing he is actually a "Romantic with liberal sympathies"[46] who found it in himself to compose (like Tolstoy, Conrad and James) "these notebooks" which the fictional editor "found"[47] among his papers.

All of these narratives recovered from their respective existential angst and the Jesus story does too. It starts with the question "shall I jump off the roof" and ends with a death and a resurrection. The thesis will return to this latter point: the point of narration, after it has discussed the actual mechanism involved in the process of narration.

The above writers, then, say they recovered but either cannot describe or choose not to spell-out how their new projects become acceptable: how their enthusiasm for life was renewed; how existential futility was **forgotten**.[48] What is fascinating about the biblical story is that there are intimations given of just this and this is really why it is included in this chapter. Before details are given, it is fruitful to revisit the cover story project in different terms: in terms of why it is put in place rather than what is put in place. Nick Cave, perhaps inadvertently, suggests that the whole gospel of Mark is permeated by "aloneness": that Jesus's immediate project (his ministry) reflects the "wilderness of his soul" where "all the outpourings of his brilliant, jewel-like imagination are in turns misunderstood, rebuffed, ignored,

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46 Ibid., p.155

47 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea,* London: Penguin, 1965, Editor's note. It is assumed Roquentin is either dead or has completely abandoned his former self.

48 This thesis claims that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is an exemplary text showing how this is done.

mocked and vilified".[49] Put less florally this means there is a tension between what Jesus said overtly and what he knew covertly. The process of narration involves a construction of a story that separates these two contradictory propositions. The biblical story is the overall narrative-consciousness. One part of it is represented by Jesus as told by his actual story recovered by Wilson. The other part of it is the Jesus represented by the story given by his disciples. The former is what Kermode, in his *The Genesis of Secrecy*, calls the **manifest plot** and the latter is what he will call a **latent plot** or interpretation. Both are available but normally a reader chooses to read one or to work out the other: that is, they choose to spell-out one of them and to not attend to, or not-spell-out, the other. All of these, however, are seen to be contained within the overt plotting. There is no covert plotting in the biblical story. Kermode does not divide by plot but by plot and interpretation but this is a big step in the path to understanding what is meant by covert plotting.

The method, used by Jesus's ministry, as related by the synoptic gospels, revolves around the use of parables: "And he taught them many things by parables."[50] Why he did so is explicitly explained by the famous Marcan quote.

> To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn and be forgiven.[51]

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49 Cave, "Introduction", p. ix.

50 Mark 4:2.

51 Mark 4:11-12 in the Revised Standard Version, quoted in Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979, p. 2. The wordings in other versions of the Bible are of course, different. In the Authorised Version, for example, it reads:

> all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

Kermode sets up his thesis by arguing that "there has been something of a consensus among experts that parables of the kind found in the New Testament were always essentially simple",[52] but then sets about dismantling this "truism". He substitutes just the opposite: the parable is not intended to elucidate the situation, at least for the outsider, but to hide it: "the divine author made his stories obscure in order to prevent the reprobate from understanding them."[53]

Matthew's version might change the interpretation. It changes the "so that" to "because".[54] This does not remove the exclusion but changes the focus. The outsiders are outside because they are too stupid to understand. Kermode describes this well: "we have two kindred but different secrecy theories….One says the stories are obscure on purpose to damn the outsiders; the other…says that they are not necessarily impenetrable, but that the outsiders, being what they are, will misunderstand them anyway."[55] The thesis puts this differently. The first is available within the text whereas the other is not: it depends upon the reader.

The problem is then made universal for the disciples do not seem to be able to understand either: "Even his disciples, who we would hope would absorb some of Christ's brilliance, seem to be in a perpetual fog of misunderstanding."[56] Kermode adds:

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52 Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, p. 25.
53 Ibid., p. 45.
54 Matthew 13:13.
55 Kermode, *The Genesis of Sec*recy, p .32.
56 Cave, "Introduction", p. ix.

> no one, so far as I know, has improved on the disciples' performance. The riddle remains dark, so does the gospel. Parable, it seems, may proclaim a truth as a herald does, and at the same time, conceal truth like an oracle.[57]

Kermode is making it clear that the teaching of Jesus may be about the mystery (or secret) of the kingdom of God but the point is either not to tell or not to understand. He then introduces his next idea: a plot separation. Kermode uses the terms manifest plot and latent plot. He identifies the manifest plot with the ordinary moral imperative of the tale and the latent plot with need for interpretation. He then adjusts the names by assigning value. He replaces manifest with **carnal** and replaces latent with **spiritual** and describes their essential difference: "[All] carnal readings are much the same. [All] spiritual readings are different."[58]

He then devotes an entire chapter to answering the question "Why are Narratives Obscure?" by starting with the claim that "'narrativity' always entails a measure of opacity".[59] He means by this two things which mirror the insider-outsider opposition. First, he is making the rather trivial, but not insignificant point that the opacity is the invention of "interpreters *de métier"* in order "to protect their profession".[60] The second point is rather more profound. It refers to the topic of interpretation. Kermode approaches this topic by analysing the narrative telling of the parables. What emerges shows that the adoption of a parable method of telling necessitates a proliferation of readings: that narrative by its very nature invites a

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57 Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy,* p. 47.
58 Ibid., p. 9.
59 Ibid., p. 25.
60 Ibid.

plurality of readings. The latent plot, he suggests, becomes available only after interpretation and "more interpreters mean more interpretations".[61]

Kermode describes the situation accurately but his answer suggests a further question: "Why should anyone want their narrative to be obscure if it were possible to make it transparent?" An adequate explanation lies in the twin facts that Jesus was not supernatural and there is no kingdom of God. Jesus knew there is nothing but didn't want to tell the flock so he tells a parable. The answer to the new "why" question is now clear in evolutionary terms. If he tells the truth to himself he will commit suicide. If he were to tell the flock and they believed him then they may commit suicide. So he does neither: he adopts existential-self-deception and the means to this end is the parable. He has a project for himself in his ministry and he promises meaning to the flock. He, however, is not exactly dishonest; he is not exactly a liar. He does announce the good news: the secret of the kingdom of God is nothing. There are two sides. Jesus is protecting himself and the listeners need to protect themselves. They can take what they want out of it as do Dimmesdale's parishioners. In the same way as the Azande[62] assign purpose to spirits so believers assign purpose to a supernatural being with a different name, God. Kermode is, in effect, showing that modern interpreters substitute their own formula: a formula which is no longer designed to give *the* answer. The two versions of the story are not different versions. They provide the two sides of the shared collusion. In short, a story now must be understood to hide the truth. The biblical story is the religious

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61 Ibid., p. 3.

62 Azande is the plural of Zande. Hence a Zande (individual), but the Azande.

way of pretending to seek the truth whilst hiding it. Interpretation is the secular way of pretending to seek the truth whilst hiding it and since each spiritual reading "is different" each interpretation reflects the enlightenment view of individuality. Kermode presses this point to the extreme. He finishes his work by essentially claiming just this: there is no truth; the stories are narratives only because of our "impudent intervention".[63] A latent plot is a Matthew-driven interpretation. It is a device invented by the listener. It does not actually exist in the text. It is abstracted from the text by the reader who brings to their reading additional information that is not available in the text.

This is true as far as it goes. It is true of the overt plot but it misses another layer. For this, another idea, introduced by Cedric Watts, is needed: his idea is of a covert plot. Now latent plots and covert plots may seem to be the same thing, but they are not. A covert plot is the Marcan version. It is imposed by the narrative. It is an actual plot that is available in the text. It may not be seen at a first reading, just like a latent plot, but it is there. It may take some time for the covert plot to become visible because whilst the reader is busy interpreting, busy discovering latent plots, then they will not discover the covert plot. If and when they do discover that what is metaphorically labelled "the kingdom of God" is more accurately called "nothing", the **pre-existing cover story** will break down and will have to be, laboriously rebuilt.

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[63] Ibid., p. 145.

(v) The Point of Narration

The point of recognition recognises that p and not-p are incompatible. The point of narration has the very specific purpose to (re)separate them. The trial narrative tells how this is done and the crucifixion narrative does it. The trial sets out the opposites. Jesus, when asked if he is Christ, answers "I am",[64] whereas Peter, when asked, denies him "thrice".[65] Then Jesus (as not-p) dies: a death which required the collusion of both sides of the narrative-consciousness. Peter survives to become "the rock"[66] on which the Church is built and the disciples survive to give their version of the God story: referred to as the resurrection. Peter's denial of Jesus and the "you are the Church" are reconciled. Jesus links the two sides. In one, he knows the truth and this is disposed of (denied). In the other, his life is stolen (resurrected) by his followers. It might be truly said that he "died to save us all".[67]

(vi) (New)(Next) Cover Story in Place

The story contains two significant entities. The first represents not-p and the second represents p. The original position of resolution, the (supposed) existence of the Jewish God, has been replaced by a modified position of resolution, the

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64 Mark 14:62 and Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, fn. 25, p. 156. The translation may be "You have said that I am" and as such is duplicated by Matthew and Luke. However, Kermode likes the first version better. He says, "From the narrative point of view the received reading is stronger, partly because it is unexpected, partly because of the counterpoint of Peter's denial." If this interpretation is accepted then it does of course negate Wilson's claim (quoted above) that the Jesus of the synoptic gospels never makes the claim to be God.

65 Mark 14: 62 and 72.

66 Matthew 16: 16-18.

67 Cecil Frances Alexander, "There is a Green Hill Far Away", *Hymns for Little Children*, London: Joseph Masters, 1852, pp. 31-32.

(supposed) existence of the Christian God. It is still, however, a meta-narrative based on the idea of an external source. The Christian God is now foregrounded and its not-p is buried.

(vi) Repetition

In the last version of the cycle of change from one cover story to another an imaginary process was considered in which the "real" disciples accommodated the "real" Jesus and put into place a story of the "biblical" Jesus. This story can now be examined by another person; an imaginary person. This imaginary person represents everybody, just as Dimmesdale, as a self-deceiver, represents everybody. Wilson, for example, must have gone through something like this process: "It was a slow, and in my case, as it happens, painful process, to discard a belief in Christianity."[68] The belief or cover story cannot sustain itself for ever for it is subjected to the same processes that afflicted Orgon and Madam Pernelle. They were bombarded with unease, internal and external evidence against it and leakage from not-p. Wilson notes that faith as it is presented in the gospel story "must seem very puzzling"[69] for general discrepancies suggest themselves even to the mind of a child. Wilson records his own experience including: "Even if we insist on taking every word of the bible as literally true, we shall still not be able to find there the myth of Jesus being born in a stable."[70] Every discrepancy must instigate unease. Sometimes it may be possible to contain each with a further re-interpretation of the

68 Wilson, *Jesus*, p. xvi.
69 Ibid., p. vii.
70 Ibid., p. ix.

text which may lead to one of the countless new sects which have emerged through the ages.

Other examples of counter evidence derive from direct experience. They derive from the experience of an increasingly secular, scientific, and sceptical community and the nature of this type of evidence precludes the possibility of a simple replacement story. The evidence comes in many forms but the most damaging have been provided by the advance of science. No one, born outside of the Christian age, believes that a virgin can conceive, that a man can walk on water or that a dead man can come alive. Every religious claim that laid itself open to testing by empirical means has been discredited. The most famous is, of course, the blunder made by the Roman Catholic Church when it "publicly condemned Galileo Galilei to 'abjure, curse and detest' any notion of heliocentric motion".[71] The breakdown of the cover story, this time, is more serious than the breakdown of the Jewish God cover story: a replacement story is no longer sufficient; a rewriting is necessary. Religion, although it may remain a cherished belief for some, can no longer claim to be a natural or self-evident belief. It becomes the case that "religious belief is not universal.…It is also evident that individuals can and do act perfectly adequately in the world without religious belief."[72]

The cover story has no choice but to break down, during the process of recognition, due to this evidence. The god-myth, providing the possibility of

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[71] James Hansen, "Can Science Allow Miracles?", *New Scientist*, 8 April, 1982, pp. 73-78.

[72] Gaskin, "Hume on religion", p. 337.

meaning to life by virtue of an entity which knows and will tell you when the time is right, may be retained by some due to the parent-child mechanism. But for others it needs to be replaced. It can be replaced by other metanarratives providing other sources of external meaning, such as science or Marxism, which may be passed on, in turn, by the parent-child mechanism. But if this is not effective, another solution has to be found. Chapter 2 has indicated what this might be: a likely contender for a new cover story is provided by modifying the essence of Story-1. Story-2 evolves out of Story-1 by retaining the view that there is still an answer, a meaning, but differs from Story-1 in that it does not claim to know what it is. It suggests meaning is there, but it is not known and must be sought for. Rimmon-Kenan transfers this generalised search to narrative when she asserts that "texts promise understanding".[73] But such a step falls into the same trap as religion and other metanarratives. It may be a widely held belief but it is not a natural belief in either the Humean[74] or the evolutionary sense. It cannot permanently hold off the attack of existential futility. It is just a matter of time before the "belief" gives way to reason. It is not a matter of "if" but "when" awareness that life is contingent, absurd, has no necessary meaning and is bound to end in death re-enters the narrative-consciousness. Once again a position will be reached when a choice has to be made. The ESDeS agrees that it is necessary to believe in something. It gives the something the name, overt plot or project. All that has changed from Story-1 is that the evolutionary imperative has become centred on an individual choice.

[73] Shlomith Rimmon Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary poetics*, London: Methuen, 1983, p.125.

[74] A natural belief is one which is believed in order to make normal, everyday life possible. Gaskins list some examples including, "belief in the continuous existence of an external world independent of our perception of the world…[and]…belief that the regularities of the past will continue into the future". Gaskin, "Hume on religion", p. 337.

However, it is not easy to turn the choice into a cover story. Isaac Bashevis Singer puts it well: "Faith doesn't come by itself. You must work for it."[75] The next few sections show some of the transitory attempts to reach the haven of the Story-2.

The Transition to Story-2

Both the modernist novel and the ESDeS emerged as identifiable narrative forms during the late nineteenth century. This period has been perceived as a period of "ambivalence".[76] It is both a looking back - "a rather tired period" - and a looking forward - "an era of new beginnings".[77] The ambivalence expressed itself in a number of ways, one of which was, perhaps, an anxiety for things lost. Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst in their introduction to the *The Fin-de-Siècle* record a typical question of the period: "what good was literacy if it was only to foster such [new and popular] literatures?"[78] Elaine Showalter puts a rather interesting and more theoretical slant onto the events of this period. She argues that the *fin-de-siècle* is a cyclical event and each involves a peculiarly existential outlook: "the crises of the *fin-de-siècle*…are…more weighted with symbolic and historical meaning because we invest them with the metaphors of death and rebirth."[79] It is not surprising then that this general ambiguity is mirrored within some texts of this

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[75] Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Penitent,* London: Penguin Modern Classics, 1986, p. 17.

[76] Sally Ledger and Roger Luckhurst (eds), *The Fin-de-Siècle, c.1880-1900: A Reader in Cultural History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. xiii.

[77] Gail Marshall (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to The Fin de Siècle*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 5.

[78] Ledger and Luckhurst, *The Fin-de-Siècle* , p. xv. The authors give many other examples all of which can be categorised under their term of degeneration which they contrasts with regeneration.

[79] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle,* London: Virago, 1992, p. 2.

period. Texts that try but do not quite succeed in moving on to a full ESDeS. The thesis has picked out a few to illustrate particular points. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* gives a fine description of the process of recognition. *Strait is the Gate* struggles with the concept of choice. Post-*Domville* James recognises the concept of motivating absence and secret and, finally, *Almayer's Folly*, which although it contains a covert plot does not quite attain the status of intentional.

(i) The Near ESDeS Reading of *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*

Ivan Ilyich's life is described as "the simplest, most ordinary and therefore most terrible".[80] In this, therefore, he represents everyone. The reader should not be able to say the events are about him but not about them. Nevertheless, this is exactly what they are invited to do. This is achieved by the plotting of the novel which disrupts the time order of events so that Ivan's death is announced before his life is described. The theme of the novella is transparent. It is about the futility of life. Tolstoy asks "is there any meaning in my life that will not be annihilated by the inevitability of death that awaits me?"[81] However, the early scenes give an abbreviated version of the message. Existential futility is presented and then negated. The readers are invited to "look but not see".[82] Acquaintances and friends (including Piotr Ivanovich) hearing of his death immediately disassociate themselves from it: "he had to go and die but I manage things better – I am alive."[83]

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80 Ibid., p. 13.
81 Tolstoy, "A Confession", p. 35.
82 A paraphrase of Mark 4: 11-12.
83 Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, p. 3.

The meaning of this is spelt out. The process and point of recognition are to be followed by an implied process of narration and a point of narration. Piotr has a brief point of recognition when he is suddenly struck "with horror" at "the thought of the man's sufferings" and "was overcome with a feeling of dread on his own account.…Why, it might happen to me…he thought…and was terrified." But immediately, "he could not have explained how, there came to his support the old reflection that this thing had befallen Ivan Ilyich and not him".[84] The message is not to foreground the death but to make life possible. The story of death is made available but it is then to be hidden. The following tells how:

> Schwartz was above all these happenings and would not surrender to any depressing influences. His very look said that the incident of a requiem service for Ivan Ilyich could not possibly constitute sufficient grounds for interrupting the recognised order of things – in other words – that nothing could interfere with the unwrapping and cutting of a new pack.[85]

Hawthorne uses a narrator to gain access to privileged information but he stays within realism by claiming he does so because he has had access to "a manuscript of old date".[86] Tolstoy in *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* is different. He provides a narrator that makes no such claim. The fictional story is told within a realist framework, but the days before the death and the actual death could be known by no one other than Ivan himself. It is told as a mixed up, long and torturous acceptance of the inevitable; a record of unsorted experiences. Since huge detail is provided by a narrator who was not present at the death and who has not provided himself with any means of knowing, the reader is entitled to assume that the

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84 Ibid., p. 10.
85 Ibid., p. 13.
86 Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, p. 220.

fictional death of Ivan is a metaphor for the death of the old cover story and the substitution of a new one. The organised story, the one presented to the world, the pre-existing story is presented by the text in terms of Ivan's successes, his marriage, his children and his pleasures: "His pleasures where his work was concerned lay in the gratification of ambition; his social pleasures lay in the gratification of his vanity; but his real delight was in playing whist."[87] This organised story is to be challenged. The start of the challenge originates (as does the real death) with his "slip" and "bruise" occasioned as he furnished and decorated his drawing room. It continues until "he does not care at all".[88] The irony becomes that for "the sake [of the drawing room] (how bitterly ludicrous it seemed) he had sacrificed his life".[89] Once he realises that he is going to die the awareness is expressed as, "he felt the old familiar, dull, gnawing pain…[that]…will never cease".[90] He struggles against it; he adopts many tactics; he "sought relief – new screens"; "He would shake himself, try to pull himself together"; "he did not think of *It*." However, he is forced to a conclusion and the conclusion was "terrible" and ridiculous" but ultimately he cannot deny it no longer. He is forced to acknowledge that "*It* alone was true." And the "*It*" is "What's the use of it all?"[91] There is no escape. He asks himself, "Why deceive myself?"[92] Everything then presents itself in a new light. Now, everything "was all rubbish and delusion". Ivan cannot "believe in it [his

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87 Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, p. 35.
88 Ibid., p. 46.
89 Ibid., p. 57.
90 Ibid., pp. 50-51.
91 This sequence of quotes is taken from pp. 56-58. Ivan's "disorganised" thoughts are rearranged to tell the process of recognition more clearly.
92 Ibid., p. 51.

organised story] any longer".[93] Pain is given as the overt cause but the underlying story is to be read differently. Ivan "groaned not so much from the pain, terrible though it was, as from mental anguish".[94] The language builds up towards a climax, the point of recognition: "loathsome", "senseless", "no answer", "no explanation", "it was all wrong, a horrible, monstrous lie concealing both life and death", and the motif word, "horror". Ivan has to choose and he chooses: "What do I want? Not to suffer. To live."[95] The question is how? Reading back, the narrative presents another story: "a gleam of hope [in a] raging sea of despair."[96] And the gleam of hope is the theme of falsity and falsity is associated with the pain. He must either live with it or pretend that "there was no more falsity – that had gone with them".[97] "What tormented Ivan most was the pretence",[98] but in this he was on his own. Everybody else "has no desire to understand [him]". The pretence is that death is disagreeable and not to be talked about. Everybody, except Ivan, is happy with this arrangement. He must choose to fall into line: "He was perfectly well aware that they were all lying all the time, and also why they were lying."[99] He considers the God solution and ostensibly rejects it as Tolstoy does in real life: but not quite. His wife asks him if he feels better after taking the Sacrament and he says, "Yes,"[100] but "the expression on his face when he uttered that 'Yes' was dreadful."[101] The "Yes" is the point of recognition: his admission into the

93 Ibid., p. 66.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid., p. 76.
96 Ibid., p. 67.
97 Ibid., p. 74.
98 Ibid., p. 62.
99 Ibid., p. 69.
100 Ibid., p. 85
101 Ibid., p. 86.

community of self-deceivers. Tolstoy says of himself: "It was so essential for me to believe in order to live that I hid from myself the contradictions and obscurities in the religious dogma."[102]

The process of narration commences: "From that moment the screaming began that continued for three days."[103] And the novel jumps to the point of narration without observing the process. Ivan emerges redeemed because he has adopted religion albeit without the dogma.

(ii) The Near ESDeS Reading of *Strait is the Gate*:

The main carnal/overt plot in *Strait is the Gate* tells of two cousins, Alissa and Jerome. Jerome tells the story, from his perspective, in his journal and through the explicit selections he makes from Alissa's letters and the implicit use of her diaries. Alissa relates her version in her letters and in her diary. Jerome tells how he loses his father at the age of 12 and is brought up by his mother and her companion, Flora Ashburton, in Paris. He and the family group escape town during the "summer every year"[104] to an uncle's home near Le Havre. It is here that he makes the acquaintance of his cousins, Alissa, Juliette and Robert. He and Alissa, he claims, fall in love but seem unable to reach the point of consummation. Alissa tells the reader that she is tortured by conflict. She feels that her love is endangering Jerome's soul so, in the interests of his salvation, she decides to suppress everything

102 Tolstoy, "A Confession", p. 70.
103 Tolstoy, *The Death of Ivan Ilyic*h, p. 86.
104 André Gide, *Strait is the Gate,* London: Penguin, 2000, p. 9.

and retreat to a nursing home where she dies at the age of twenty five. Her death leaves Jerome to cherish her memory. The near ESDeS reading of *Strait is the Gate* is told in three parts: Jerome tells the story of his relationship with Alissa up to her death; then Alissa retells it through her point of view in her diary; and then there is a codicil in which Jerome tells of his meeting with Juliette ten years after. The text as a whole begins with the title and a biblical reference, Luke xiii, 24.

The text, obliquely, allows Jerome to give the epigraphic parable an interpretation through metaphor which establishes that there are two parts of the overall narrative-consciousness. It describes the garden at the holiday home in Le Havre. It contains the two paths: one path was "gay with flowers"; the other was the "dark walk".[105] The description continues by describing the gate between the garden and the outside world in two ways. This, if added to the two homophonic possible readings of the title and the two paths, clearly warns that there is an existing cover story but that it is about to split.

The split is the focus of an ESDeS reading of this novel. The gate is described first as having a "secret fastening"[106] and second as being secret in its entirety: "the little secret gate."[107] This not only makes the secret ambiguous, it is a misuse of the word for neither the fastening or the gate itself is really secret. Neither the secret of the gate nor its fastening provides an impediment: Jerome and

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105 Ibid., p. 10.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., p. 11.

the family pass in and out of the gate "every fine summer evening".[108] If the text is to be relied upon as a parable teller the secret must refer to things other than fastenings or gates. The secret refers, of course, to existential futility. This novel focuses on how this choice can be narrated. It indicates immediately through metaphor that a retelling will not be enough this time: a different type of story is needed. To the inside of the gate there are the two paths and everybody, it seems, has to either walk down one or the other. But this is a false dichotomy. The unreliability of the text which eventually becomes apparent has immediately confused the possibilities. In fact, there is another alternative. Outside of the gate there are an infinite number of paths. Outside, it is true, there is only one "avenue", but in this avenue there is a bench and, from the bench, there are a multiplicity of views across "the little valley filled with mist".[109] Inside there is only good and bad: outside there is what is perceived by each individual person on the bench looking over the countryside. Inside there is the thematic story of meaning which revolves around religion (Story-1). Outside there is uncertainty (mist) associated with individual choice (Story-2).

The story, when reread in an ESDeS way, reveals a happy childhood and the process of separation. Walker reports that "much of the communication between the two [Jerome and Alissa] is accomplished only indirectly from the earliest stage in their story".[110] Jerome sees what happens from his perspective and Alissa sees

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108 Ibid., p. 10.
109 Ibid., p. 11.
110 Walker, *André Gide*, p. 47.

the same objective events quite differently. Alissa, nearer the final split, writes in her "book":

> As if in this book, which I began only so as to help myself to do without *him*, I was continuing to write to *him*. I have torn up all the pages which seemed to me to be *well written* (I know what I mean by this.) I ought to have torn up all those in which there was any question of him. I ought to have torn them all up, I could not.[111]

On the surface it is just a description of the difficulty of separation. Underneath it may threaten more. "Book" in the translation is "cahier" in the original and this is quite different from book and allows the possibility that the first reader, the translator, is colluding with the text to hide it prior motivation. The suggestion is that the complete book represents a narrative-consciousness and should, therefore contains two available ideas which come to light because of the splitting. By conflating the part with the whole this risks being overlooked. The side given the name "Alissa" has the function of existential angst and as such is duty bound to separate herself from Jerome so that the side given the name "Jerome" can take on the function of projects without impediment. It will be recalled how Mill and Tolstoy expressed their immediate post-point of recognition as the inability to enjoy what had previously been enjoyable. Alissa has an almost identical experience. She says, in one of her letters to Jerome: "My books are without virtue and without charm; my walks have no attraction; Nature has lost her glamour; the garden is emptied of colour, of scent."[112] Jerome in contrast has plans for a book, travels and spends time in the army. The contrast is spelled-out by Gide with two contrasting

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111 Gide, *Strait is the Gate,* p. 116.

112 Ibid., p. 76.

views expressed at one of their later attempts at reconciliation. Jerome describes the morning as breathing "laughter and delight" to which Alissa responds "we were not born for happiness".[113] This is an attitude that Alissa comes to represent: "I see nothing beyond; my life stops."[114] Alissa is surrounded by a growing number of motif words such as absurd and futile and uneasiness[115] and gives uncharitable opinions, as when she interprets her brother's success as a novelist: "I hear his incurable futility of mind called 'lightness' and 'grace'."[116] Walker concludes that "it might be argued that Alissa discovers the existential void at the heart of human reality".[117]

At the beginning of the story the whole collection of characters used the gate to walk in the avenue and sit down on the bench. By the end of the story the situation has changed. Alissa goes inside the door and the bolt is "drawn behind her".[118] *She* is not said to do the deed; it just happens: "the door was shut."[119] Jerome is now afraid to go inside the gate. He says "to have forced the door…was not possible to me, and whoever does not understand me here, has understood nothing of me up till now."[120] Alissa leaves the house to go to a nursing home in Paris. The text here is describing the split which has occurred in the narrative-consciousness. What comes after describes how this split is to be accommodated.

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113 Ibid., p. 87.
114 Ibid., p. 76.
115 Ibid., pp. 78-80.
116 Ibid., p. 73.
117 Walker, *André Gide*, p. 42.
118 Ibid., p. 105.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid.

This thesis suggests the narrative-consciousness has recognised existential angst. Alissa is just the personification of this proposition. Strictly speaking Alissa by going back into the garden and locking the gate and going on to die is as perfect a description of "buried" or "hidden" as it could be hoped for. Jerome continues to live. The process of narration would be completed if Jerome went on to put a new project or cover story into place. But the text is unable to make this last step. The main story cannot tell the story that it is promising to tell. This not-telling is reserved for the codicil.

The codicil is necessary to provide the culmination of the dilemma. It describes Jerome's meeting with Juliette ten years after Alissa's death. The death which finalised the split in the narrative-consciousness was presented as totally Alissa's own choice. Jerome and Juliette do everything in their power to prevent it. This is crucial. The separation is not collusive. Alissa acts it out despite them and dies. Her death, although by starvation, is in effect a one-sided suicidal choice. Jerome survives and should go to make a life represented by Juliette for in the manifest plot she represents Gide's Madeleine who he is said to have preferred and in the latent plot she represents a life that is worth living. However, he cannot or does not quite make either of these steps.

Jerome both rejects Alissa's godly ways, but also seeks them. He says he plans to stay faithful "to her idea of me".[121] He admits he does not have the necessary skill of existential-self-deception. In response to Juliette asking "What

[121] Ibid., p. 128.

are you waiting for to marry?" he says, "To have forgotten a great many things."[122] He has become a teacher but this is just a role: for he does "not hope ever to forget".[123] He is leading what Sartre would call an inauthentic life and what this thesis will call **failure of existential-self-deception (ESD)** for he "couldn't do otherwise".[124] He finally chooses but his choice is contrary to the advice given by Juliette. He chooses not to "wake up".[125] As for Juliette, as a minor part of the narrative-consciousness, she finishes the book in the shade where it was not possible "to distinguish her features"[126] and where it might be surmised she was in regretful tears. The text acknowledges that the Story-2 project has been well lit up but is, in the end, defeated. The narrative-consciousness represents a perfect personification of Hawthorn's "deep nostalgia for an earlier age when faith was full and authority was intact".[127] It has seen the inevitable, but cannot quite bring itself to take the extra step.

(iii) The Near ESDeS Reading of the Jamesian Oeuvre between 1892-1903

Henry James "is a crucial figure in the transition from classic to modern fiction",[128] and his work is often classified, like Gide's *Strait is the Gate*, by, for example, Bradbury,[129] within the modernist movement. He is preoccupied with what he calls

122 Ibid., p. 127.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., p. 128
125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Jeremy Hawthorn, *A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory,* London: Edward Arnold, 2000 (entry under modernism and postmodernism).
128 Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel,* p. 50.
129 See chapter 2 above.

"the air of reality"[130] which is "what in some shape or form we might [immediately] encounter".[131] He concerns himself with points of view and consciousness but, like Gide, fails to tell an ESDeS. His texts lack references to existential despair: they neither indicate its presence by genre-marking nor by its spelling-out in a covert plot. But he gains attention from this thesis, as indicated in chapter 2, because he satisfies the criteria for a likely ESDeS author: he is an autobiographical author who was in self-deception when he was writing during this period.

These reasons only attract attention to his work. His actual work is the focus of this part of the thesis. His work during the period between 1892 and 1903 contains aspects important to ESDeS. The stories introduce or expand upon the concepts of **bracketing deaths**, **secret** and splitting and involve the ideas of self-deceptive collusion and repetition. However it is necessary, before looking at two examples of his work, to clarify the function of this examination. The thesis is about ESDeS. This thesis therefore is not interested in James as such; it has no opinion on whether or not he is "the author of some of the most mind-bogglingly obscure prose" or is "one of America's greatest novelists".[132] It is clear, however, that his work does forment an immense volume of criticism. It seems possible to find any imaginable theme inside his writing: themes "of metaphysical evils…of queer identity, of racial mixing, of Rooseveltian masculinity, of female power and

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130 Henry James, "The Art of Fiction", in Morris Shapiro (ed), *Selected Literary Criticisms*, London: Penguin, 1968, p. 86.

131 Ibid., p. 84.

132 Jonathan Freedman (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. xi.

imperial destiny – to name just a few".[133] This proliferation of alternatives does not, however, include any suggestion that this work contains covert plotting. This is a shame for the availability of these countless "interpretations" would exactly fulfil the function of disguising such a plot if it existed.

The possibility of a covert plot, however, is hinted at. It is given the name "essential secret" by Tzvetan Todorov. Todorov refers to the "secret of narrative" and discusses it at length, basing his discussion on Henry James's short fictions between "1892 to at least 1903":[134] "The secret of Jamesian narrative [is] precisely the existence of an essential secret, of something not named, of an absent and superpowerful force which sets the whole present machinery of the narrative in motion."[135] When Todorov refers to "absences" he means "the tale is formed around a character or a phenomenon enveloped in a certain mystery".[136] He regards the absence as a motivating cause of what follows: namely the narrative. He states: "The absence of the cause…is the text's logical origin and reason for being."[137] However, this has a strange echo to it. James's technique, as described by Todorov, mirrors the technique Kermode has found in parable telling: Todorov finds James "on the one hand…deploys all his forces to …reveal the hidden secret; on the other, he constantly postpones, protects the revelation – until the story's end, if not beyond."[138] Maisie, as has been argued, is an example of this. She, too, is

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133 Ibid., p. xiv.
134 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977, p. 133.
135 Ibid., p. 145.
136 Ibid., p. 146.
137 Ibid., p. 145.
138 Ibid.

just the same at the end as at the beginning. This appears to be just another way of putting this thesis's narrative-consciousness theory's circular progression from cover story to cover story: but it is not quite the same. From now on the thesis takes responsibility for the extrapolation of Todorov's views. It thinks that the choice of terminology, "absence", makes it clear that the cover story has broken down but thinks Todorov overlooks the obvious fact that the secret is available to the narrative-consciousness because it is this which motivates the story. From the reader's point of view it may look like the text is trying to discover the secret but from the narrative-consciousness point of view the objective is different. It is trying to re-hide it. Todorov also draws attention to the necessity of repetition, via structure of the storytelling, which "allows James to keep beginning it [another telling of the story] over and over".[139] He is implying that since it is a fact that the story is repeated then it follows that the secret is not found and the search has to continue. But this again does not quite fit the facts. Each time James starts a new story the motivating secret is a different secret: Maisie is not really the same at the end as at the beginning. She is divided into two in each case but in the beginning she has no responsibility for the division whilst in the end she is "dropped" as well as "divided": she is innocent at the beginning and collusive at the end. At the beginning, things happened to her. At the end she says, "Yes, I've chosen."[140] From this, it should follow that if the next story starts with another motivating absence the last story implicitly ends with a new cover story that requires another point of recognition or "absence". So even if Todorov does not exactly state that

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139 Ibid.

140 Henry James. *What Maisie Knew*, London: Penguin, 1985, p. 254.

the narrative, which is motivated by the absence, also ends with the substitution of another cover story, it is implicit in his account. In effect the story is bracketed by "absences". Todorov divides James's stories into five classes of absence, one of which is "both absolute and natural, with pure absence: *death*".[141]

Nor does Todorov suggest why the story should be repeated. As stated, James has a choice. He could continue with his sequence of stories involving an absence in each but he need not do so. The fact that he does, however, suggests an imperative. This thesis suggests the imperative follows from the narrative-consciousness's need to continually repress awareness of existential angst. If this is so then it would no longer be a matter of choice but a matter of necessity. Insofar as James's stories reflect his narrative-consciousness at this time then they do need to be repeated. This thesis finds, as an empirical fact, the absence in the covert plot involves a **collusive death plot** so has adopted the term bracketing deaths for the frame of the covert plot.[142] This use of the term is supported because of the necessity involved in ESDeS. It is further supported by the curious way Conrad reports the completion of a story. He wrote to his aunt, in one of many examples, when he finished *Almayer's Folly* and said "I regret to inform you of the death of Mr. Kaspar Almayer, which occurred this morning at 3 o'clock."[143]

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[141] Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, p. 161.

[142] This is not always the case. In the case of Jesus in Story-1 above the "initial relevant death" was in fact a baptism. In James's *The Other House* (1896) the end absence involves the leaving (only) of Rose Armiger. But the term is retained for it emotive effect.

[143] Letter to Marguerite Paradowska, April 24, 1894, in Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (eds), *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Volume 1, 1861-1897*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 153.

Between the deaths, Todorov says: "The effect of this cause is the narrative, the story we are told."[144] He does not, however, adequately explain why this "entire narrative" which does not resolve the narrator's nor the reader's ignorance should either be a job worth writing for the author or a job worth reading for the reader. He does hint at it, however: "The quest for the secret must never be ended, for it constitutes the secret itself."[145] This could be translated into ESDeS terminology: There is an endlessly repetitive journey from cover story to cover story in which the secret is discovered and lost over and over again. The narrative-consciousness reasserts the split between its part that *knows* and *dies* and its part that *does not know* and continues to *live*. James is clearly on the verge of moving on to ESDeS. He lacks only collusive covert plotting. Two examples have been chosen to illustrate his method.

The first story, which precedes the *Domville* episode, is "The Figure in the Carpet". Its narrator-critic (NC) is told by an author, Hugh Vereker, that he had missed the point of his writing: "There's an idea in my work without which I wouldn't have given a straw for the whole job."[146] The two discuss it seriously for a moment before the discussion descends to an almost post-modern example of word play. "An element of form or an element of feeling is discounted" and "some idea about life" accepted before the NC starts a series of jokes: "Perhaps it is a

144 Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, p. 145.
145 Ibid., p. 175.
146 Henry James, "The Figure in the Carpet", in *Collected Stories, Vol.2*, London: Everyman, 1999, p. 310.

preference for the letter P!"[147] Nevertheless an ESDeS reading might reasonably assume that the "idea about life" contained nothing less than a reference to existential futility, although the text never makes this explicit. It does, however, make it clear that the "secret"[148] is structural: "something like a complex figure in a Persian carpet" or "the very string…my pearls are strung on".[149] The secret is fundamental and the rest superficial: "It stretches, this little trick of mine, from book to book, and everything else, comparatively, plays over the surface of it."[150]

The secret is approached by the text in two ways. The first way is experimentally. The NC starts to look for what he comes to call the "general intention"[151] behind Verecker's work and his description of his search shows clearly that he *does* appreciate it, but just does not recognise it. His description replicates, again, Tolstoy's and Mill's real life discovery of existential futility. He says:

> I not only failed to find his general intention – I found myself missing the subordinate intentions I had formerly found. His books didn't even remain the charming things they had been for me…Instead of being a pleasure the more they became a resource for less.[152]

The text then moves on from the essentially introspective narrative and turns more into a sequence of events. The NC passes on his knowledge to his friend, George Corvick, and his friend, Gwendolen. After some time George tells

147 Ibid., p. 312-313.
148 Ibid., p. 312 and elsewhere.
149 Ibid., p. 317.
150 Ibid., p. 311.
151 Ibid., p. 314
152 Ibid.

Gwendolen, in a double exclamation that predates Kurtz's "Horror!" by two or three years that: "He has got it, he has got it."[153] His claim is verified textually by Vereker himself, who says there "is not a note wrong"[154] and by actions, for Corvick does what anybody does when then have experienced the horror: "he had thrown everything up."[155] A series of narrative events, including the marriage of Corvick to Gwendolen, occurs which prevent the certain passing on of this discovery. Corvick then has an accident and dies. This death would immediately be identified, within an ESDeS reading, as the required separation. Not-p is hidden and p is allowed to carry on. The story could end. It would not be a covert plotting as such but it would have similarities. The overall narrative-consciousness makes the same claim as Watts will make with respect to a full covert plotting. It makes it plain that the secret is available. Vereker claims "I've shouted my intention" and "if you had [a glimpse of it] the element in question would soon have become practically all you'd see".[156] Then, the text notes with glee that "Nobody does" [see].[157] Certainly the NC "hadn't so much as hinted at it".[158]

However, the story does not stop. Gwendolen claims "I heard everything"[159] from her husband but no narrative substantiation is given to her claim. She certainly does not pass the good news on to the NC. She does however remarry – a Drayton Deane. Once again there is a death. Gwendolen dies in

153 Ibid., p. 323.
154 Ibid., p. 326.
155 Ibid., p. 325.
156 Ibid., p. 311.
157 Ibid., p. 318.
158 Ibid., p. 315.
159 Ibid., p. 331.

childbirth. Once again it might be assumed within the narrative-consciousness theory that not-p had been hidden leaving p behind making the point that the process is necessarily repetitive. The thesis thinks this is probably not the point the text best makes. The NC naturally assumes that if George passed the knowledge on to Gwendolen, she would have, in her turn, passed it on to Drayton. This proves not to be the case for he didn't know. The NC admits this in a very significant way: "He wasn't acting – it was the **absurd** truth. She didn't tell."[160]

It follows therefore that George did not tell Gwendolen. It follows therefore that the text is making it plain that, by 1896, the parent-child mechanism is not so universally applied - an individual is not first told the existential secret and then told how to accommodate it - but must find out existential angst for themselves and deal with it for themselves. Re-reading the text provides second-reading evidence for this. Vereker regrets telling the NC that the secret exists. He comes to regard it as a mistake: "I begin to measure the temerity of my having saddled you with a knowledge that you may find something of a burden."[161] It seems likely therefore that George told Gwendolen only this. She certainly tells the NC, who knew of the secret, that she meant "to keep it to herself"[162] and she clearly did not tell her new husband at all. If the narrative-consciousness does, de facto, kill off not-p it does so without the cooperation of the p part of itself. It therefore cannot put in place a collusive covert plot. It seems reasonable to assume, therefore, that the narrative-consciousness, called James, has only two spelled-out messages. The first is that

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160 Ibid., p. 339. My bold emphasis.
161 Ibid., p. 316.
162 Ibid., p. 331.

there is a secret and the second is that if you come to recognise the secret as horror, keep it to yourself. The narrative-consciousness hints at "buried treasure"[163] but, like Jerome, does not know what to do with it.

The second story, which ends the post-*Domville* period, is 'The Beast in the Jungle' (1903). James again makes the retention of the secret "the explicit theme"[164] of this story. A carnal reading of the story tells of the relationship between May and Marcher. Marcher has told May that he expects something special to happen to him: that he was "being kept for something rare and strange".[165] May claims to have discovered the secret but dies without telling him. She dies praying that "he mightn't ever know".[166] He eventually, perhaps, discovers that the secret is that nothing ever happens to him because he has spent his time waiting for something to happen. This is sad but the reader might, but need not, agree with Todorov that the mistake seems "too insignificant"[167] to merit the hyperbolic terminology used to describe it. Marcher's behaviour does not, at first reading, seem to merit the term "heroic".[168] The secret "thing" does not seem to merit the term "monstrous"[169] and its discovery does not seem to deserve the term "horror".[170] In *The Iceman* Cometh, Hickey is horrified because he has killed his wife. Kurtz associates horror with death and existential futility. Horror is not a

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163 Ibid., p. 313.
164 Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, p. 175.
165 Ibid., p. 744.
166 Henry James, "The Beast in the Jungle", in *Collected Stories, Vol.2*, London: Everyman, 1999, p. 782.
167 Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, p. 143.
168 Ibid., p. 756.
169 Ibid., p. 766.
170 Ibid., p. 782.

term to apply to nothing happening. Of course, if the reader expects more from James, as Kermode expects more from Henry Green,[171] then the hyperbolic prose may be justified by either a spiritual reading such as provided by Leigh Wilson[172] or by an ESDeS reading as provided now.

The story has a separation: this time personified as May, who knows something, and Marcher, who does not. Todorov's analysis of the story again comes to the conclusion that "the secret was the existence of the secret itself",[173] but goes a little further this time. He sees May as going further. She recognises there has to be a project: any project. For her it has been her love for Marcher, but she makes it clear anything else would have been as good: "what else does one ever want to be [but interested]?"[174] Todorov also makes it clear that Marcher does not recognise the necessity of project. The text implies that he knows very well that the "beast" is existential futility for he says quite clearly "it isn't a matter as to which I can *choose* …. It isn't one as to which there *can* be a change."[175] He also claims that it, "the thing", "lay in wait for him, amid the twists and the turns of the months and the years".[176] He knows it, but chooses to forget it, although it keeps returning. James makes the issues important by putting them at the beginning and discussing them at length. He has Marcher observe he was "disconcerted almost equally by the presence of those who knew too much and by that of those who knew

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171 See: "we know that many insiders think well of Henry Green, so we assume that the book is not trivial and vacuous, even if it seems so at first." Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, p. 7.

172 Leigh Wilson, "'It was as if she had said…': May Sinclair and Reading Narratives of Cure", unpublished PhD thesis, University of Westminster, 2000, p.21.

173 Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, p. 176.

174 James, "The Beast in the Jungle", p. 754.

175 Ibid.

176 Ibid., p. 750.

nothing".[177] He is not in a position to be happy with existential angst (Story-3) or able to accept unquestioning belief in Story-1. Marcher then goes on to make a huge fuss about remembering, but this turns out to be more like the process of recognition. He remembers each fact incorrectly and does not remember the crucial one until he is forced to. May has to virtually drag "his secret"[178] out of him. When he does finally admit it there is a (Hickeyean) echo of the point of recognition about the way he does so: "Oh, then he saw, but he was lost in wonder and found himself embarrassed."[179] He had managed to forget it, for "ten"[180] years between the first meeting and the second, and managed to forget it again "for a year"[181] between May's death and the culminating scene by her grave. Between times Marcher clings to the idea that there is a purpose and, therefore, doesn't adopt a real project. In the first "sabbatical" he finds some "forms": "those of his little office under Government, those of caring for his modest patrimony, for his library."[182] In his second, "he visited the depths of Asia, spending himself on scenes of romantic interest".[183] May's position is different. In the carnal plotting she presents herself as an interested companion. She knows perfectly well that the two of them cannot coexist. It is made clear (but not explained) that "marrying [was] out of the question".[184] May realises that "something or other lay in wait for him" and it was something she could not "share".[185] She is under no illusions about

177 Ibid., p. 737.
178 Ibid., p. 743.
179 Ibid.
180 Ibid., p. 739.
181 Ibid., p. 777.
182 Ibid., p. 752.
183 Ibid., p. 777.
184 Ibid., p. 749.
185 Ibid., p. 750.

what this entails. She expects she "will be but too well repaid".[186] She spells it out for Marcher: "You've had your experience. You leave me to my fate."[187] The narrative-consciousness is aware of existential futility and the need for its forgetting. To achieve this, the story arranges a split. Although Marcher has had the experience, it is May who takes on board the knowledge: "she 'knew'."[188] She accepts that in order for Marcher not to know, she has to die. The death allows Marcher to continue. However, once again it is not a collusive arrangement between parts of the narrative-consciousness. Marcher does not acquiesce in the arrangement. As a result his way of living, his construction of project, is not very impressive. He is like Jerome and the Narrator-Critic in "The Figure in the Carpet": he has the opportunity but can make nothing of it. He can't really get away from his "beast": he spends his time fiddling with projects but is really just waiting. The return of the awareness of existential futility is inevitable and this really is the existential reading of this text. Consider the crucial last paragraph: "He saw the Jungle of his life and saw the lurking Beast; then while he looked, perceived it…it was close and, instinctively turning…to avoid it."[189] May tries to move the story on to Story-2, but Marcher, although "disconcerted" by it, insists on clinging onto Story-1. He cannot face existential futility but neither can he move on.

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186 Ibid., p. 755.
187 Ibid., p. 766.
188 Ibid., p. 747.
189 Ibid., p. 783.

(iv) The Near ESDeS Reading of Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*

Gide and James were obsessed, at the times of writing, with normal-self-deceptions. Conrad, in contrast, became very much interested in existential angst although this had not quite flowered at the time of his writing of *Almayer's Folly*. Bruce Johnson states that: "There seems to be general agreement among critics that in his first two novels Conrad is particularly interested in … the paralysis of will."[190] It is certainly true that Almayer is portrayed as not taking responsibility for his downfall whereas Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, as will be shown in the next chapter, falls in a half way stage; he does take responsibility but chooses to ignore it. This on its own is sufficient to deny *Almayer's Folly* ESDeS status but this is not the reason given by this thesis. It argues that an ESDeS requires an intentional or collusive covert plot. Cedric Watts shows that the book does contain "an important covert plot".[191] It will be shown, however, that the covert plot is not collusive - for the two parts of the narrative-consciousness identified with p and not-p do not agree with the death choice.

The main purpose of reading this novel, at this stage, is to illustrate the process of covert plotting. It is convenient, therefore, to be reminded of the meaning given to this. The covert plot is similar to a normal overt plot in that it is a purposeful sequence available in the text as written. It is differentiated from a normal overt plot in that is partly hidden so that it may elude readers. It is also

[190] Bruce Johnson, *Conrad's Models of Mind*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971, p. 9.
[191] Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 47.

differentiated from latent or spiritual plots in that it does not require interpretation using information or knowledge not actually available in the text.

Almayer's Folly is set on a trading river in the East Indian island of Borneo, and is told through the narrator and the reported internal musings of the eponymous hero. It is through the latter that the scene is set:

> He [Almayer] absorbed himself in his dream of wealth and power away from this coast where he had dwelt for so many years, forgetting the bitterness of toil and strife in the vision of a great and splendid reward. They would live in Europe, he and his daughter. They would be rich and respected. Nobody would think of her mixed blood in the presence of her great beauty and of his immense wealth.[192]

Almayer is thus introduced as a certain self-deceiver and a possible racist: themes expanded at length until the arrival of Dain Maroola (a quarter of the way into the novel) introduces the possibility of movement. Dain engages with both Almayer and his daughter, Nina. Almayer thinks it will now be possible to make his fortune by travelling upstream to find a source of diamonds and gold. Nina anticipates love. The preparatory work done, *Almayer's Folly* picks up speed. The Balinese hero sets out, at night, to cross the river in flood. He does so because he needs to escape the Dutch after a failed trading expedition and because he wants to see Nina. The reader finds out what happens in real time when a mutilated corpse is found next morning. Its face is unrecognisable but the corpse is identifiable from the ring and bangle that Dain always wore. Almayer is distraught; for Dain was to have been his saviour, but the Dutch think their pursuit is at an end and go away.

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[192] Joseph Conrad, *Almayer's Folly,* New York: Dover Thrift Editions, 2003, p.1.

Almayer goes through three stages of decoding. First he is shown the mutilated corpse, which he secondly and wrongly assumes is that of Dain. Then, finally he does make the correct decoding: only tardily does Almayer (and the reader) discover that Dain is alive and the body was a mere boatman who had been mutilated by Mrs. Almayer (Nina's mother) and the jewellery donated by Dain himself. From the reader's perspective this is an example of a covert plot that does not quite go all the way. It is a plot hidden from the reader for several pages although the reader is given clues to disentangle the truth before it is given. One such clue is the lack of concern shown by Nina. From Almayer's point of view, not knowing of Nina's love for Dain, this might not give alarm, but for the reader it is a clear signal amplified by her actual comment: "with her heart deeply moved by the sight of Almayer's misery, knowing it was in her power to end it with a word, longing to bring peace to that troubled heart, she heard with terror the voice of her overpowering love commanding her to be silent."[193] In contrast to a true covert plot, however, the text provides the solution first to the reader and then to Almayer. The text on this occasion is clearly only delaying the truth: it is not deliberately hiding the truth.

The overt plot continues with the escape of Dain Maroola and Nina. Their escape means, and this time for good, that Almayer's plan for wealth is totally destroyed. He will not be able to pretend to himself that wealth is to be obtained and, with the wealth, he will be able to escape back to Europe with his daughter. Immediately after it is decided that the lovers should leave, it is also decided that

[193] Conrad, *Almayer's Folly*, p. 66.

Almayer should forget: "Now she was gone his business was to forget, and he had a strange notion that it should be done systematically and in order."[194] Almayer is described as doing so immediately: "he fell on his hands and knees, and, creeping along the sand, erased carefully with his hand all traces of Nina's footsteps."[195] The two actions - escaping and forgetting - are inextricably linked.

In the absence of his ambitions, what is there for Almayer? The reader may, on a second reading perhaps, pay more attention to an earlier passage:

> [Almayer] looked very dejected and feeble; and by his side…stalked that particular fiend whose mission it is to jog the memories of men, lest they should forget the *meaning of life*. He whispered in Almayer's ear a *childish prattle* of many years ago. Almayer, his head bent on one side, seemed to listen to his invisible companion, but his face was like that of a man that has died …[196]

The addition of "childish prattles" can be made to the long list of synonyms - pipedream, saving lie - for self-deception. No longer able to believe in his original cover story, his project - the possibility of riches, of returning to Europe, of negating Nina's mixed blood - and unable to invent a new one, there remains for Almayer only one alternative. Without a self-deceptive project, existential futility re-emerges and cannot be resubmerged. The narrator describes his release thus: he was "delivered from the trammels of earthly folly, [and] stood now in the presence

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194 Ibid., p. 126.
195 Ibid.
196 Ibid. My emphases.

of Infinite Wisdom. On his upturned face there was the serene look which follows the sudden release from anguish."[197]

The covert plot identified by Watts is called "Abdulla's Stratagem".[198] He justifies calling it a covert plot (as opposed to a sub-plot) for two reasons. First, it had, according to Watts, up to the publication of his book "eluded the recognition of the work's critics and commentators".[199] Second, the reason it has remained hidden, he would argue, is because of "Conrad's cunning"[200] rather than the reader's obtuseness. However, signals are available. Self-deception is often indicated by "something missing" and, Kermode claims, it may be possible to find a spiritual reading by "putting a lot of exegetical pressure on one point".[201] An ESDeS, it has been argued, is signalled by appropriate genre-markers. A covert plot, argues Watts, is signalled in a similar way. He suggests that it is often introduced by the appearance of an "anomaly",[202] where he means by anomaly "some detail which seems discordant with the overt plot".[203] The two sides can, it seems, coexist: "a reader notes as odd or puzzling some conspicuous elements of the covert plot but does not proceed to infer their linkages."[204] These "odd elements" appear from very early on in the text of *Almayer's Folly* and could give rise to a number of questions such as: "why has Almayer proved to be so unsuccessful as a trader?" and "was Dain betrayed?" If unease is instilled in the

197 Ibid., p. 134.
198 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 47.
199 Ibid.
200 Ibid.
201 Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, p. 7.
202 Ibid., p. 14.
203 Ibid., p. 31.
204 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 31.

reader they may look back and make the "anomalies" explicit. If they do so, they start to read the covert plot.

Syed Abdulla had long wished to dominate trade of the River Pantai and to overcome Almayer. The narrator reports that "the Arabs had found out the river, had established a trading post in Sambir, and where they traded they would be masters and suffer no rival".[205] Now Abdulla by any method of measurement is a minor character. He gets very few mentions before the crucial death scene. If they notice him at all before this point, the reader would tend to ignore him as irrelevant to the main ongoing story, as an intrusion, perhaps to give the sense of realism. He never reveals any of his inner life and never makes any development. Insofar as he is noticed it is probably as a representative of a whole group (Arab in this case) rather than an individual. Almayer makes this mistake as shown when he mutters to himself: "Arabs, no doubt.…What are they up to now? Some of Abdulla's business; curse him."[206] The main plots flow on independently (with the Dain-Nina affair dominating), so a reading concentrating on the Almayer-Abdulla plot necessitates detailed re-reading. It will then be found that Syed Abdulla has considered a number of methods to overcome Almayer. One method he had considered involved a scheme of marriage. He had thought his loyal nephew, Reshid, might marry Nina, but this scheme was rejected out of hand. Incidentally this can be overlooked as part of the covert plot since it also has a role to play in the overt plot: it does not fit in with either Almayer's racism or his "childish prattles".

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[205] Ibid., p. 14.
[206] Ibid., p. 79.

Abdulla concocts another scheme. He tells the Dutch that Dain is trading illegal gunpowder with the hope that his supplier, Almayer, will be implicated and removed from the river. Again this scheme fails because the Dutch identify Abdulla as the correct villain. Nevertheless the scheming is in the text. "How did you hear about the brig?" asks Almayer, and is given the answer "An Arab trader of this place has sent the information."[207] This treachery is repeated as soon as Abdulla and Reshid discover the truth behind the body in the river.

Watts does an impressive job identifying the covert plot but he then leaves it at that. He does not adequately explain why the covert plot is inserted. He knows this is a weak point in his case for he asks rhetorically:

> The sceptical reader may well say, however: if the covert plot matters, what is the point of making it covert? If something counts, why does the author hide it? And what is the point of hiding it if it is still doomed to be eventually found? The stuff's either seen or it isn't. If it isn't why include it? And if it is seen surely it isn't covert?[208]

His answer is that "the text searches reality and offers us a training in the searching of reality by encouraging us to search itself".[209] This is weak and this is strange since Conrad spells-out the (ESDeS) reason in the very last line of the narrative: "'Is he dead?' he asked. 'May you live!' answered the crowd in one shout. And there succeeded a breathless silence."[210] Almayer dies and Abdulla lives. It is as if Watts fails to notice what he has so well explained. The training, if training it is, is

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207 Ibid.
208 Ibid., p. 1.
209 Ibid., p. 2.
210 Ibid., p. 134.

to *not* notice the covert plot and when it is (finally) noticed (by a troublesome Watts or his ilk) a new cover story is needed.

An ESDeS reading of *Almayer's Folly* has Almayer as only a part of the narrative-consciousness: the part that carries knowledge of existential angst. It is in the nature of ESDeS that this knowledge is relegated to a covert plot but it is neither necessary nor desirable to spell-this-out any more clearly. If existential futility is spelt-out too obviously, the text risks (re)inviting awareness of it into the narrative-consciousnesses of both the writer and reader. In this case, however, *each* plot copies the essential division and mirrors the other. Each represents a dichotomy that cannot continue to exist for long since they are mutually exclusive possibilities. The dichotomies in each plot are brought to a crisis by the river drowning scene and resolved by Almayer's death. The process of narrative choice is completed by his death. The death is, however, shown to be one-sided. Neither Dain and Nina nor Abdulla co-operate in it. Conrad recognises the significance of this: he tells his aunt "the last chapter…ends with a long *solo* for Almayer".[211] It spells-out his death in suicidal detail. He smokes opium with Jim-Eng and alternates between a longing to forget and awareness of existential futility.

> He knew perfectly well what was to be done now. First this, then that, and then forgetfulness would come easy. Very easy. He had a fixed idea that if he should not forget before he died he would have to remember to all eternity. Certain things had to be taken out of his life, stamped out of sight, destroyed, forgotten.[212]

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[211] Letter to Marguerite Paradowska, May 2, 1894, in Karl and Davies (eds), *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Volume 1,* p. 156.

[212] Ibid., p. 128.

The narrative-consciousness as a whole recognises the need to split. The covert plot shows that either Abdulla or Almayer must die. The overt plot sets Almayer up against Dain and Nina. Either his future plans or theirs must die. Wealth-making and love, respectively, continue whilst Almayer, representing existential futility, clearly takes it upon himself to choose and does in fact die: "The only white man on the east coast was dead."[213] When Almayer talks about forgetting he is talking about himself, what he represents. He represents the unspeakable and must be forgotten to allow the human projects to continue – which they do. The narration does not end with the end of the story, for readers are clearly told one half of each dichotomy is to continue. The project "love" continues beyond the text for Conrad specifically mentions: "We had news from Bali last moon.… A grandchild is born to the old Rajah, and there is great rejoicing."[214] Similarly the "wealth-making" project continues with Abdulla, who has the last word: "And as they passed through the crowd that fell back before them, the beads in Abdulla's hand clicked, while in a solemn whisper he breathed out piously the name of Allah! The Merciful! The Compassionate!"[215] The new cover stories are in place.

Story-3

This chapter opens with the claim that it would help to define Story-2 by saying what it is not. This has been done by looking at precursors. This approach is continued here by examining a story which does not fit in with Story-2 at the back

213 Ibid., p. 134.
214 Ibid., p. 133.
215 Ibid., p. 134.

end. That is: if, faced with the choice, acceptance of paradox is the path taken then there is no need for a split or a new cover story. And there is no need to go further with the process of narration. There is no need for repetition or a further need of a process or a point of recognition. All that is needed is this particular choice. That is, an individual must not only recognise existential futility but make what becomes a double choice: both not to "bury" this knowledge and to live with it. Some have claimed this is possible. Terry Eagleton, for a very authoritative and recent example, probably expresses his own view when he paraphrases Heidegger who says that to live authentically "is to embrace our own nothingness, accepting the fact that our existence is contingent, ungrounded and unchosen".[216] The willing choice replaces the unmotivated choice. Eagleton goes on to describe the consequences of such a choice: "To accept death would be to live more abundantly.…By acknowledging that our lives are provisional, we can slacken our neurotic grip on them and thus come to relish them all the more."[217]

However, it seems unlikely that anybody does this. Thomas Nagel expresses this as: "The objective standpoint may try to cultivate an indifference to its own annihilation but there will be something false about it: the individual attachment to life will force its way back."[218] Eagleton, paradoxically, also seems to support this point of view: "Anyone who genuinely believed that nothing was more important than anything else…would not be quite what we recognize as a

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216 Terry Eagleton, *After Theory,* London: Penguin, 2004, p. 210.
217 Ibid., p. 210.
218 Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 231.

person. And you would only need to observe them in action for five minutes to recognize that they did not actually believe this at all."[219]

Henry Green, however, comes very close in his *Party Going*. Now, it is probably true that the popular view of modernist authors is that they concern themselves with "various typical themes" and these include "the search for meaning in a world without God…[and]…the loss of meaning and hope in the modern world and an exploration of how this loss may be faced".[220] This is easily illustrated by looking at student lecture notes such as those posted by John Lye at Brock University. Whether or not this is generally true, it is true that the manifest plot in Green's story *is* concerned with the meaning of life but, unlike the others discussed so far in this chapter, it does not seem to want to evade the knowledge that there is none. Indeed, Green acted out what he may be interpreted to say in *Party Going*: "He published nothing after 1952.…These twenty-two mute years mark perhaps…a more personal withdrawal into the despair that always fringed his pellucid world."[221]

The overt plot, in *Party Going*, is merely a story about a group of rich people going on a trip but being held up at the station because the trains are unable to run because of weather conditions. The first line sets the scene: "Fog was so dense."[222] The continuity of the story relies on a remarkable series of meetings giving an

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219 Eagleton, *After Theory*, p. 200.

220 John Lye, "Some Attributes of Modernist Literature", www.brocku.ca/english/courses/2F55/modernism, 2008.

221 John Updike, "Introduction", Henry Green, *Loving, Living, Party Going,* London: Picador, 1978.

222 Henry Green, *Party Going*, London: Vintage Classics, 2000, p. 1.

overwhelming sense that the story is trivial and vacuous. The rich people are wasting their time at the station and the impression given is that it would make no difference if they were in the south of France - they would still be wasting their time. Frank Kermode, in *Genesis of Secrecy*, suggests that a second, latent, narrative is indicated by an extra-textual belief: "we know that many insiders think well of Henry Green, so we assume that the book is not trivial and vacuous, even if it seems so at first."[223] Such a reading may draw attention, for example, to the contrast between the "ostentatious rich" and the "patient, cheerful, competent"[224] people. Kermode dismisses this split as too obvious. He is looking for something more "occult". However, what is looked for is determined by what genre-markers are noted: "Other interpreters would certainly choose different moments."[225] Less prosaically, perhaps, the desire for a more meaningful plot foregrounds, as a theme, existential futility. If so, other indicators might be expected and death certainly is omnipresent. The capital letters "DEPARTURES" at the station follows the arrival of a dead pigeon into the story and they come second only to "Fog" in text order. They are the first of many symbolic references to death, which also includes the possible interpretation of the mystery man who travels from the locked hotel to the station concourse, backwards and forwards from the world of the rich to the world of the poor and from the happy and young to the old. Kermode thinks he represents the messenger of death. Tim Parks sums up this line of thought with: "what is the marvellous fizz of shenanigans that makes up the bulk of the novel, if not an heroic

223 Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, p. 7.
224 Ibid., p. 11.
225 Ibid., p. 16.

attempt to keep death at bay?"[226] Fog is foregrounded and death is foregrounded but their opposites are not hidden. Julia, one of the spoilt young rich, is able to see beauty in the light of the headlamps, everybody finds everybody else despite the impenetrability of the fog, and the plot is an open and transparent attempt to live with the realisation of existential futility: genre-marked as death. The train is merely delayed by fog. Green does not take the chance that the novel can merely be described as "the way things are" with no ontological significance. He does not put in abundant references to pointlessness but the whole telling reverberates with it. Faced with this onslaught of nothingness the reader may well be tempted to make another reading, a specifically ESDeS reading. If so it would start off well. Green beautifully illustrates the notion that there is no "we" - "that 'identity' and 'character' [are] convenient and somewhat over-generous fictions"[227] - so that the ESDeS reader would see the story as just a mechanism for making available a single narrative-consciousness.[228] The characters are shown to be neither particularly individual nor self aware. Seven party goers are going on the trip, but in the first few pages it is difficult to disentangle who they are. The introductions are so jumbled it takes several readings and a pencil and paper to distinguish them from each other. Each character is introduced in different versions: boy friend; Robin; Robin Adams; relationship with Angela Crevy. Sentences are used that conjoin ideas and therefore suggest the conjoining of characters. The dialogue is often indistinguishable. Often both action and speech come as the result of the

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226 Tim Parks, "Introduction", Green, *Party Going*, p. xii.

227 Ibid., p. ix.

228 The thesis does this with respect to its readings of Gide and to James.

merest compulsion. Finally Julia makes this point overtly. She says, "What do we know about anyone?"[229]

However, although the book may contain dyadic pairs it does not go on to split the narrative-consciousness. The next step in *Strait is the Gate*, in James's short stories and in *Almayer's Fo*lly was to look for a link character that would indicate a 'split'. Jerome served the purpose between Alissa and Juliette, but in *Almayer's Folly* with its embryonic covert plot it was suggested that a minor character, Abdulla in this case, with no real purpose to the main story is often a main indicator of a covert plot. In this case it is likely that the mystery man, the only character who does not have a name, is the link. Nobody knows who he is, but he does a lot of linking. He links Julia in the hotel to her cases on the concourse. He links Julia to Miss Fellowes. He links the insiders - the rich in the hotel - and the outsiders - the workers in the concourse. But the mystery man is so well marked he cannot be missed. It is as if James's "secret" which is not spelled-out has attached itself to the man by not giving him a name. In *Party Going*, however, the secret is spelled-out and is not anything significant. The Messenger does not lead off to a plot that no one notices. The outside is there and remains there: not very much exploited but definitely not hidden. The servant and the bags wait and are available when necessary. Miss Fellowes does not lead off to a plot that no one notices. She feels ill during the novel and needs attention but at the end of the novel she recovers

[229] Green, *Party Going*, p. 56.

and the trip goes on "in spite of Miss Fellowes".[230] Kermode, however, makes a big thing of the mystery man in his "mythological reading",[231] a reading that is as ambiguous as the text it draws on. He draws attention to what are essentially extra-textual pieces of knowledge: knowledge an ordinary reader may not have. He notes the "stranger" has different appellations - "the rough looking customer", "the hotel detective" - and suggests he could be a thief "who might eye the luggage of the very rich" but, ultimately, seems to equate him with Hermes, "who as psychopomp conducts the dead to the underworld".[232] Having made the interpretation, he does nothing with it. He seems to content to make the six points (in all), including that many interpretations are possible - "More interpreters mean more interpretations"[233] and interpretation can come "forty years" after publication.[234] He could have made the essential theme death. This is a possibility, an ever present possibility, but here it just doesn't happen. What does happen is that Miss Fellowes does not die and life goes on inside the hotel, unlike Alissa, as well as outside on the concourse. Her life goes on as do the main protagonists and the workers once the "first train went out".[235] And, given their relationships, each life goes on exactly as before, with the full knowledge of each other. The possibility for an overt-covert plot distinction is recognised but not acted upon. There is an obvious insider and outsider situation and a messenger between the two but nothing happens. Hermes does not carry anyone off in either one direction or another. Alissa went inside and stayed. These frivolous rich went inside but come out again. Hermes goes back

230 Ibid., p. 153.
231 Op. Cit., Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy*, p. 7-9.
232 Ibid., p. 8.
233 Ibid., p. 3.
234 Ibid., p. 17.
235 Green, *Party Going*, p. 153.

and forward. The outside is mentioned over and over again but on the whole not paid any intention. In this sense then the novel passes beyond the ESDeN. P is mentioned and not attended. Not-p is foregrounded and coexists with hedonism. Some might argue this is okay, that "a series of dazzlingly complex dialogues, hilarious social manoeuvrings and tawdry sex games"[236] is an adequate substitute for "purpose". If so it is a subject for another thesis.

On the other hand, some might not think this is an acceptable approach. Certainly it seems that its originator thought that it could only stand so many repetitions. It is this thesis's view that the majority of people do not, or cannot, see that to adopt the Story-3 method is "to live more abundantly".[237] This thesis's view is that they choose, instead, to adopt the ESDeS procedure. ESDeS is either the only story or it is sandwiched between 1 and 3. A full exposition of the Story-2 technique follows with the analyses of *Heart of Darkness*, *Chance* and *Thinks*.

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236 Tim Parks, "Introduction", p. xi.

237 Eagleton, *After Theory*, p. 210.

Chapter 4

Heart of Darkness

The case has been put that there are good grounds for thinking that a specific novel genre can be identified and given the name existentially-self-deceptive-novel (ESDeN). *Heart of Darkness* turns out to be an exemplary but complex text which not only illustrates what is already known about ESDeS but builds on two additional ideas, intentionality and repetition, and introduces the possibility of two types of repetition, **serious** and **unserious**. These ideas are embedded in each other and are difficult to discuss using a linear narrative so, to help navigate through the analysis, the reading will be presented in parts. The first part will be entitled "Overt Plotting". This consists of the manifest plot and any interpretations. In general ESDeS is not interested in these because they are seen as distracters from the covert plot. However, a discussion is included to reiterate the point of view that where existing interpretations are interesting they can be effective in this purpose. In addition this thesis has shown, in the ESDeS telling of the Bible story, that at the early part of the story continuum, where there exists a parent-child mechanism, a specific interpretation takes the form of an ESDeS telling of the process of self-deception. This is also the case here. However, its description is divided into two parts to emphasise that it will hide, within it, a covert plot. Its inclusion is, in effect, another genre-indicator. The next part of the chapter should add to this genre-marking to indicate the presence of a covert plot but this is postponed to part four so that a section, entitled "Intentionality", can be interpolated. The problem of intention has been signposted a number of times because self-deception theory

demands that any self-deceiving and any covert plotting is intentional. It has intruded into the discussion on a number of occasions: it has been demonstrated empirically by Hannay, in *The Thirty Nine Steps*; Watts and Dennett have given their behavioural definitions; ESDeS status was denied to *Almayer's Folly* because of its absence. *Heart of Darkness* is replete with further examples and fills in any doubts with respects to the relevance of intention to ESDeS.

The demonstration of intentionality within *Heart of Darkness* is achieved with a three-pronged approach. The first is picked up by Watt, Pelikan Straus and Gekoski from a letter written by Conrad which indicates that he thinks the point of the story is in its codicil. The second approach is via the more legitimate textual analysis suggested by Watts. The third line of attack is the most crucial but waits for the section which uncovers the covert plot. Once these preliminary discussions are out of the way the thesis returns to the uncovering of "Genre-Markings" which indicate and justify the search for a covert plot. Once a reader is convinced that a covert plot exists, a good means of locating it is to find bracketing death-like events. However, in *Heart of Darkness,* there are a number of candidate deaths and these have to be un-picked first and this discussion is contained in "Bracketing Death-like Events". In doing this, a further concept, important to this thesis, emerges. This concept is called repetition. It too has been signposted a number of times, as a likely genre-marker, imaginatively described within the retelling of the Bible story and given theoretical substance via Todorov's analysis of James. Its importance is spelt out by the repetitive deaths and the idea, when established, will

subsequently be used to discuss the two types of repetition possible within ESDeS. Once the beginning and ending deaths are determined this chapter progresses with the next section, "Covert Plotting". It identifies the split, the link character and the actual covert plot. It will be seen that, in this case, the covert plot *is* based on the notion of collusion and it is this which finally establishes the meaning of intention. The chapter then returns to the ESDeS process by describing Marlow's journey back. This takes the process from the point of recognition, reached in the second section, up to a problematic point of narration. Although this will be seen to complete the cycle from cover story to cover story, it leaves the reader realising that the process is inherently unstable. In this case the point of narration becomes almost immediately the next point of recognition showing that repetition or further storytelling will always be needed. Finally therefore, the thesis has to return to the idea of repetition in order to show that it is possible to disentangle two types of repetition given the names serious *and* unserious. This distinction will be given plenty of signposting during this chapter. It will be given further substance at the end of this chapter and it will become clearer and more fully explored in chapter 5 which shows how Marlow – the surviving aspect of the narrative-consciousness that is *Heart of Darkness* – achieves completion by reappearing in *Chance.*

Overt Plotting

Heart of Darkness tells of Charlie Marlow's journey up a river to find a mad Kurtz who has abandoned his idealistic vision of suppressing savage customs and instead

has set himself up as a god. Kurtz leaves behind, in Europe, his betrothed who is called by the text "the Intended". When Kurtz dies Marlow carries the news back to her. This summary, of course, does not do it justice for the work holds, in addition to this manifest story, a wide range of references to other themes. Watts says the work "has long been recognised as one of Conrad's major works, and has evoked a wealth of exegetic writing".[1] Mark Currie goes further and says it "is the most analysed narrative in history".[2] A full review, therefore, is not possible but, fortunately, it is also not necessary. The following provides a brief survey to indicate and introduce those critics and ideas that will intrude, later, into the ESDeS analysis.

The short novel is about 100 pages long. Cedric Watts has provided a comprehensive coverage of the work which has not been bettered. He differs from this thesis in that he sees his task as the elucidation of the work as an individual work of art but he makes some telling points relevant to this thesis. He draws attention to numerous inherent paradoxes in the text and introduces possible themes as this appears appropriate. He conveniently makes a list of the paradoxes and these include: "Awareness is better than unawareness: we may become aware that it is better to be unaware."[3] Clearly, this exactly describes this thesis's p, not-p split. In addition, he also draws attention to three important themes which have similarities to claims made by the ESDeS theory. These are, to give them his

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1 Cedric Watts, *Conrad's Heart of Darkness: A Critical and Contextual Discussion*, Milan: Mursi International, 1977, p. 1.

2 Mark Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory,* Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1998, p. 135.

3 Watts, *Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, p. 4.

names, work ethic, solar death and the evolutionary theme. The work ethic allows for a split between those that have it and those that do not with the possible interpretation that those that have it are merely engaged in a "surface truth" or project. Solar death clearly has an echo in existential futility and narrative-consciousness theory development through Story-1 to Story-3. Although the evolutionary theme, for Watts, relates to his reading of the "survival of the fittest" it has a clear link with this thesis's notion of prior explanation.

There are, in addition to thematic approaches, a number of interpretations that concern themselves more with plotting content. The most obvious is, according to Currie, "European imperialism through the example of the Congo Free State".[4] Another familiar one is known as the "grail quest": that is, a story in "which the pursuit of a divine object gives the narrative its forward movement".[5] In *Heart of Darkness* Marlow certainly searches for something anthropomorphised in the person of Kurtz. He, according to Currie's synthesis of J. Hillis Miller's analysis, travels towards Kurtz in the hope of some revelation regarding the meaning of the narrative. In this sense the story is like a parable "where the story…must be removed and discarded so that the meaning…may be assimilated".[6] However, it is more like a parable – and like James's "secret" - than it first seems. In a parable, it will be recalled, this interpretation is an illusion. The telling of the parable is not intended to uncover the meaning but to disguise the fact that there is

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4 Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, p. 138.

5 Ibid., p. 140.

6 J. Hillis Miller, "Heart of Darkness Revisited (1985)", in R. Muffin (ed.), *Heart of Darkness: A Case Study in Contemporary Criticism,* New York: St Martin's Press, 1989, pp. 211-212, quoted in ibid. p. 140.

no meaning. *Heart of Darkness* repeats this process: for though Kurtz is discovered there is no meaning to be found. This thesis agrees of course that something is not told, is hidden, but it also asserts that there is a prior hidden. The prior hidden differs from the above in that it is a necessary hidden. It refers to what Sartre calls "futile passion": "a quest…to be like God…[which is]…impossible; man, who cannot abandon a project which he also cannot fulfil".[7] Another interpretation, or perhaps an extension of this interpretation, is given by Peter Brooks's view that the thrust of the text is about the failure of language to reveal the truth: "What stands at the heart of darkness…is unsayable, extralinguistic."[8] This approach leads into, as Currie draws attention to, "an enquiry into a collective psyche, a social desire for plotting and telling".[9] This may be so but it reiterates the naming approach discussed in the introduction, where it was argued that anything ubiquitous was likely to have an evolutionary origin. Nevertheless, named or justified, it also allows the view that the psyche is the telling, and the plotting shows the way the psyche works and as such is another reiteration of narrative-consciousness theory.

Another interpretation takes the grail quest into the interior. An old version of this psychoanalytic approach is provided by Guerard. He sees the journey as a "spiritual voyage of self-discovery"[10] and a "night journey into the unconscious".[11] Kurtz then is not seen as a separate identity, but as an aspect of Marlow's psyche.

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7 Arthur C. Danto, *Sartre*, Glasgow: Fontana, 1979, p. 24.

8 Peter Brooks, "An Unreadable Report: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness"*, in Elaine Jordan (ed.), *Joseph Conrad*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996, p. 8.

9 Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, p. 143.

10 A. J. Guerard, *Conrad the Novelist*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958, p. 38.

11 Ibid., p. 39.

Watts sees this as unfruitful for, as he interprets the Freudian id, the id should not develop and clearly Kurtz "has undergone such important changes during his time in the Congo".[12] Watts argues that Guerard's reading would mean that Marlow should be "an ego-like facet of some greater Marlow".[13] Taking the general point of division of a greater whole into two parts, however, does not necessitate Watts's conclusions. The difference between Guerard and this thesis would seem to be that the thesis thinks both parts of the split are available (conscious) in the text and both parts, as parts of the same consciousness, are able to develop. Other approaches are even more theory-based and even more contained by the overt: one of these is based on perceived absences (which recalls Todorov's analysis of James) and is given considerable attention in the next section. It concerns Ian Watt's and Nina Pelikan Straus's picking up on the absence of women. Finally, a more recent reading is provided by Bernard Paris who produces a "mimetic portrait"[14] of the transtextual Marlow. This transtextuality has already been suggested by Watts and the idea will be picked up by the thesis at the end of this chapter and in chapter 5. It is incorporated within the concept of repetition which will be shown to have two facets: differentiating what Sartre calls bad faith and this thesis will call failed ESDeS or serious from the temporary notion of ESDeS or unserious.

Two final notes draw attention to the fact that the narrative-consciousness theory recognises that the content of its ideas have often been noticed before,

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12 Watts, *Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, p. 143.

13 Ibid., p. 144.

14 Bernard J. Paris, *Conrad's Charlie Marlow: A New Approach to "Heart of Darkness" and Lord Jim*, New York: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2005, p. viii.

although they have been used differently. It has been argued that Kermode's interpretation of the biblical texts of Mark and Matthew leads to a split: with Mark saying the covert plot is put in place by the author of the parables and Matthew saying the overt plot interpretations are discovered by the listeners. Pelikan Straus and Brooks, taken together, might be said to argue the same thing. Straus claims, according to Currie, "Criticism may be…a covert form of autobiography."[15] Brooks argues "the way stories are told, and what they mean, seems to depend as much on narratee and narrative situation as on narrator."[16] For this thesis the autobiography is the story generated by a narrative-consciousness. *Heart of Darkness* is generated by a narrative-consciousness too and its job is to hide awareness of existential futility – which is a universal necessity – by using a cover story – which is an individual function. The reader's part in the process is to cooperate and miss these facts by missing the covert plot. So it is the individual invention that must be kept deliberately in the foreground. A.N. Wilson calls this "the powerful narrative effect of distracting our attention from the matter in hand".[17] It follows that, on the other hand, if the reader wants to discover the covert plot the best way to do so is to do the opposite and not obsess about some aspect or other of the overt plot.

The point can be emphasised by returning to Watts's views of *Heart of Darkness* as being concerned with paradoxes and comparing this with the alternate ESDeS view. Watts says, writing of Kafka and Beckett:

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15 Currie, *Postmodern Narrative Theory*, p. 145.
16 Brooks, "An Unreadable Report: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*", p. 82.
17 A.N.Wilson, *Jesus*, London: Flamingo, 1993, p. 213.

> Both writers seduce us into attempting to allocate specific meanings to the Castle and Godot; and then thwart us by finally permitting only the general meaning, namely: the category of ultimate meaning-givers – a category that may have no content. Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* anticipates *The Castle* and *Waiting for Godot*…by tempting us to give a specific definition of Kurtz's nature, a definition which other factors in the presentation of Kurtz then contradict.[18]

The deliberate introduction of ambiguity and contradictions is not, in Watts's view, because no final meaning can be found. He observes the paradoxes and then sees his task as attempting "to resolve them".[19] This thesis, in contrast, sees the paradoxes as straightforward distracters. The choice of paradox, like the choice of interpretation, does not matter except insofar as they disguise the covert plotting. Marlow himself concurs with this view: "my speech or my silence, indeed any action of mine, would be mere futility. What did it matter what any one knew or ignored?"[20]

Despite the fact that Gekoski notes that there are already "as many 'readings' of the story as its Mr Kurtz has tusks of ivory",[21] there many be room for one more: a process of self-deception plot. If a parent-child mechanism is used within the overt plot it shows two things. First, that Conrad is not too happy about abandoning Story-1 in order to put in place Story-2 and, more importantly, if the overt plot were to tell of the existence of a covert plot it would seem to defeat the essential purpose of hiding. This need not be the case. The message would

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[18] Watts, *Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, p. 3.
[19] Ibid., p. 155.
[20] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* in *Youth/Heart of Darkness/The End of the Tether*, London: Penguin, 1995, p. 95.
[21] R. A. Gekoski, "*Heart of Darkness*", in Harold Bloom (ed.) *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness - Modern Critical Interpretations,* New York: Chelsea House, 1987, p. 57.

actually be, since the overt plot says there is a covert plot there is no need to actually look for it. This could be called a reverse template argument:[22] that what is obvious does not need examination. Its obviousness keeps the problem an unconsidered theoretical one and hides the problem as an actual one: an actual one which needs to be accommodated every time it forces itself from hiding – possibly by reading *Heart of Darkness* - into the spelling-out mode.

ESDeS Overt Plotting: The Self-Deceptive Process from the Pre-Existing Cover Story to The Point of Recognition.

Watts, in his comprehensive summary of *Heart of Darkness*, breaks down the story into sections. He chooses "Title", "Opening" and "Marlow's Narrative" as his framework. He further breaks the last category down into smaller segments describing parts of the journey. His breakdown can be translated into an ESDeS breakdown set. After the title, the narrative starts by framing the story with Marlow's interaction with his audience on the *Nellie* (pp. 47-52).[23] Marlow starts his story with the normality before the trip including his job hunting (pp. 52-60). This can be redesignated as the cover story before the trip. Marlow's trip from the moment of getting his job to Kurtz's Inner Station (pp. 60-113) becomes the process of recognition (of absurdity) with a lingering belief in a personal goal. Marlow's stay at the Inner Station including Kurtz's first appearance, in the "jungle

[22] See below for Watts's actual template argument and his three other justifications for the inclusion of covert plotting.

[23] The bracketed page numbers are to Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* and give an indication of their relative importance.

scene", and the bit of the trip back before Kurtz's death (pp. 133-137) becomes, for an ESDeS, the process of recognition that there is no God. Marlow's trip back, after Kurtz's death, to Brussels (pp. 137-143) becomes the process of narration: the process of making a new cover story possible. Marlow's meeting with "The Intended" (pp. 143-147), ending with the lie (p. 147), becomes the point of narration which will be, as the thesis will soon show, followed immediately by a renewed point of recognition.

The first section of the inner narrative represents normality or the pre-existing cover story. It contains only a slight suggestion of what is to come. Marlow tells his audience that "he doesn't want to bother [them] with what happened to me" but to interest them in the chap he met "up the river"; a meeting he describes as the "culminating point of my experience".[24] Given the importance Marlow gives to Kurtz, this opposition suggests its opposite: that the chap up the river and himself could be conflated. Apart from this, the section appears to be a relatively common-place narrative telling of Marlow's search for a job. This is followed by his trip up the river. It has already been stated that this represents a quest for meaning. It can, however, be divided into before and after meeting Kurtz. Even before he gets to him Marlow is having trouble with the meaning of life. His experiences include many surreal events such as the "objectless blasting" of a rock that "was not in the way of anything" and when the "heavy and dull detonation shook the ground.... No change appeared on the face of the rock."[25] Then he

[24] Ibid., p. 52.
[25] Ibid., p. 63.

begins to ask "what it all meant",[26] to notice and feel grateful that "the inner truth is hidden – luckily, luckily"[27] and, finally, to acknowledge that "any action of mine, would be a mere futility".[28] This section may be said to culminate in the famous "shoe scene", to be discussed later, which definitively establishes the context of absurdity. Nevertheless, despite all these pointers, Marlow hasn't yet met Kurtz and he still has hope for he expresses "extreme disappointment"[29] when he supposes Kurtz must be dead.

The next crucial stage of this interpretative narrative version of *Heart of Darkness* starts when Kurtz appears. The text reinforces the belief that Kurtz and Marlow are aspects of the same narrative-consciousness by repeatedly coupling them together. Marlow finds himself "lumped with Kurtz", forced "to a choice of nightmares", and reluctantly concedes, "I am Mr Kurtz's friend."[30] Insofar, therefore, as Kurtz represents existential angst the narrative-consciousness has to decide whether to allow Marlow to live with him (Story-3) or to split from him (Story-2). There are indications both ways but on balance he indicates that it is not likely that Kurtz will impress him: "I resented bitterly the absurd danger of our situation, as if to be at the mercy of that atrocious phantom had been a dishonouring necessity." He adds almost immediately and apparently inconsequentially: "Kurtz - Kurtz - that means short in German - don't it? Well, the name was as true as

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26 Ibid., p. 73.
27 Ibid., p. 89
28 Ibid., p. 95.
29 Ibid., p. 106.
30 Ibid., p. 127.

everything else in life - and death."[31] "Absurd", "death" and possibly "atrocious phantom" connect Kurtz to the existential dilemma and Marlow shows he would like to put distance between them with his disparaging comments "bitterly", "atrocious" and "dishonouring necessity". Further, any affirmative statements are immediately qualified: "I had turned to the wilderness really, not Mr Kurtz"[32] and his friendship assertion is watered down with, "in a way".[33] Marlow goes further than even this. Kurtz is gradually demonised. Marlow tells his listeners, on the *Nellie*, albeit in a retrospective intrusion, that Kurtz was:

> little more than a voice. And I heard - him - it - this voice - other voices - all of them were so little more than voices - and the memory of that time itself lingers around me, impalpable, like a dying vibration of one immense jabber, silly, atrocious, sordid, savage, or simply mean, without any kind of sense.[34]

Marlow is surely indicating that not only is Kurtz undesirable but he would actually like to disengage from him - or not so much from Kurtz but from the ideas associated with the name of Kurtz. This desire is surely what he means when he refers to the "culminating point of my experience". The "point" actually occurs in the direct, one-to-one conflict with Kurtz followed by his death. Kurtz disappears from his cabin and Marlow discovers this. He follows his trail, finds him, and debates with him. Kurtz clearly wants to stay where his power base is but Marlow does not intend to let him stay. He tells Kurtz, "You will be lost", and tells his listeners he perceived this in a "flash of inspiration". He threatens "I'll smash your

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31 Ibid., p. 123.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p. 127.
34 Ibid., p. 107.

head" and "I will throttle you for good".[35] Marlow then waxes philosophically for a whole page and the whole page needs to be read to get its full flavour. But a few phrases make it clear that the division between the two characters is at stake. Kurtz is unambiguously described as both "existential man" and "lost".

> There was nothing either above him or below him, and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. He was alone, and I before him did not know whether I stood on the ground or floated in the air.[36]

Marlow, finally, is able to take Kurtz back to the boat and, long though it is, it is necessary to include the passage for it encapsulates the final "point of recognition of existential angst" - with almost Sisyphusian imagery:

> He struggled with himself, too. I saw it, - I heard it. I saw the inconceivable mystery of a soul that knew no restraint, no faith, and no fear, yet struggling blindly with itself. I kept my head pretty well; but when I had him at last stretched on the couch, I wiped my forehead, while my legs shook under me as though I had carried half a ton on my back down the hill. And yet I had only supported him, his bony arm clasped round by neck - and he was not much heavier than a child.[37]

Kurtz dies very shortly afterwards with "The horror! The horror!" on his lips as everyone knows, but the significance, for an ESDeS reading, lies not in this but in the next line. An ESDeS reading requires a separation but if the reader concentrates on Kurtz it will be missed. Kurtz is only an aspect of the overall narrative-consciousness. He is the part that represents existential futility. The choice is made that he will die and take this awareness away. The other side of the separation remains. This is the part of the narrative-consciousness called Marlow.

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35 Ibid., p. 131.
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid., p. 133.

He acknowledges, "I blew the candle out and *left the cabin*."[38] The separation of p from not-p is established - in principle.

It seems clear that there is so much here that Watts's concept of "imaginatively intentional" is justified. Intention, however, is so important to the concept of ESDeS that it will be further spelt-out in the next section.

Intentionality

The narrative in *Heart of Darkness* is divided into two parts plus a codicil: the first part tells of the trip up the river; the second tells of the trip down the river; the codicil describes the meeting between Marlow and the Intended. Conrad asserts that the codicil is the crucial part and Ian Watt, Pelikan Straus and Gekoski, as readers, agree. Once this is identified as the correct portion of the novella, the text is able to *reinforce* this conventional notion of intention by exhibiting intention, as defined by Dennett and Watts, with a covert plot. The covert plot turns out to be a collusive death plot and it is this agreed version of events which can finally take on a definitive meaning for intention within the context of an ESDeS.

In the author's case, the evidence comes directly: abstracted from a letter written to Cunningham Graham:

> I am simply in seventh heaven to find you like *H of D* so far. You bless me indeed. Mind you don't curse me by and by for the very same thing. There are two more instalments in which

[38] Ibid., p. 137. My emphasis.

> the *idea* is so wrapped up in *secondary notions* that You - even You - may *miss it*.[39]

The "idea" maps on to the self-deceptive p and not-p and the "secondary ideas" map onto the distracters so there can be no doubt that the "so wrapped up", in this passage of the letter, suggests that Conrad was *deliberately* hiding something in his story. He clearly did not expect the "it" to be easily found since he claims that one of his most ardent readers would be likely to "miss it". He might have said of any reader, "you will be so attached to whatever you see in your first reading that you will miss anything else". However, a number of readers have overcome the limitations of a first reading and have accepted his implicit challenge to look for "it". Clearly the looking can take the form of looking for a covert plot, as will be discussed later, but there are also other more straightforward "interpretations". The thesis concentrates on those provided by Ian Watt, Nina Pelikan Straus and R.A. Gekoski.

These critics all agree with this thesis that the passage describing the interview between Marlow and the Intended, at the end of the story, provides the secret although they all stop short of the conclusion that it represents the point of narration. Despite this, their arguments all have significant elements to contribute to an ESDeS analysis: Watt identifies the significance of the interview and hints that Marlow is existentially-self-deceiving; Straus uses the concepts of prior,

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[39] Letter to R. B. Cunningham Graham, 8th Feb., 1899, in Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (eds), *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. 2, 1898-1902*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 157. My emphasis.

universal and secret; Gekoski unambiguously identifies the centrality of ESD and identifies the Intended with the horror.

Ian Watt, after quoting bits of the above quotation, says "Conrad nowhere specifies what these 'secondary notions' were"[40] and then sets about looking for them. This thesis takes the view that this is a serious misreading of Conrad's letter. It is clear that it is the "idea" that is hidden and the "idea" is singular. The secondary notions are both unspecified in terms of number and camouflage. It seems, also, that even if the secondary notions were to be identified it does not follow that the "idea" would be identified as well. Indeed, it seems likely, on the contrary, that the identification of any of the secondary notions would prove so satisfactory to the enquiring reader that the reader would look no further. In terms of the self-deceptive novel, then, the "idea" is available but not admitted. More so; since the number of secondary notions is not specified then a reader who is unsatisfied with one interpretation is at liberty to seek another. Nevertheless, Watt finds, in a letter Conrad writes nearly two years after the one quoted above, what he calls "a clue".[41] The letter is to his publisher. Part of it says:

> I know exactly what I am doing…in the light of the final incident, the whole story in all its descriptive detail shall fall into its place - acquire its value and its significance. This is my method based on deliberate conviction. I've never parted from it… the last pages of Heart of Darkness where the interview of the man and the girl locks in - as it were - the whole 30000 words of narrative description into one suggestive view of a whole phase of life and makes of that story something quite on

[40] Ian Watt, "*Heart of Darkness* and Nineteenth Century Thought", in Bloom (ed.), *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness,* p. 83.
[41] Ibid.

> another plane than an anecdote of a man who went mad in the Centre of Africa.[42]

He interprets the quotation as meaning it is "one of the secondary themes [which is] locked in"[43] where surely, as before, a more viable reading is that it is the "idea" which is locked in and any secondary interpretations of the scene are a diversion from the idea. However, Watt's chase after what he sees as the "locked in" secondary notions does establish the centrality of the "interview". Watt starts from the premise that one of the secondary notions is "presumably Marlow's view of women".[44] He gives several textual examples of it, and ends with the conclusion:

> Marlow at the end finds himself forced to lie to her about Kurtz. One reason is that if he told the truth she would not have the necessary grounds in her own experience to be able to understand it, another is that since for all his seeking Marlow himself has found no faith which will move mountains, his nostalgia inclines him to cherish the faith that ignores them.[45]

Nina Pelikan Straus would certainly take issue with the view that Marlow's misogyny is simply a personal view of feminine weakness. She sees it, instead, as more indicative of a patriarchal society. Feminists argue that a simple meeting between a man and a woman is not possible for it is always constructed via a patriarchal ideology: "The lie Marlow offers her [the Intended] is understood to be a chivalric act . . . underscoring an ideology."[46] For Straus this specific becomes the general with echoes of Kermode's view of parables: with insiders and outsiders.

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42 Letter to William Blackwood, 31st May 1902, in Karl and Davies (eds), *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. 2, 1898-1902,* p. 417.

43 Watt, "*Heart of Darkness* and Nineteenth Century Thought", p. 83.

44 Ibid., p. 83.

45 Ibid., p. 84.

46 Nina Pelikan Straus, "The Exclusion of the Intended from Secret Sharing", in Jordan (ed.), *Joseph Conrad*, p. 56.

For Straus, it is not a meeting between a man and a woman but a process of depicting "a world distinctly split into male and female realms - the first harbouring the possibility of 'truth' and the second dedicated to the maintenance of delusion".[47] She raises a number of interesting points relevant to this thesis. First, she observes the possibility of something coming prior to something else: "No matter how the meaning of *Heart of Darkness* is defined…[there is a prior aim] of a homocentric universe"[48] achievable by a number of means - and the means are not of first importance. Once this is allowed then there is the possibility of a prior even to this, a prior hinted at various points of Straus's thesis. Her identification of a male-female split has already been noted. However, this is not what this thesis means by its existential split. It is necessary for knowledge of this split to be buried away from the storyteller as well as the listener. Straus, perhaps inadvertently, backs this up with her constant references to the ubiquitous word, secret: "the deliberate use of a frame to include readers as hearers, suggests the secret nature of what is being told."[49] Later in the article she goes even further: "The guarding of secret knowledge is the undisclosed theme of *Heart of Darkness*."[50] This absence cannot be emphasised too much, for the only thing that is actually told is nothing. As Gekoski says, for example, "we are never to know the secret of Mr Kurtz's degradation, or the nature of the 'abominable satisfactions' in which he has immersed himself".[51] Nor are we told why Kurtz chooses to leave the Central Station and return home, nor are we told what "The horror! The horror!" means.

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47 Ibid., p. 50.
48 Ibid., p. 52.
49 Ibid., p. 50.
50 Ibid., p. 62.
51 Gekoski, "*Heart of Darkness*", p. 67.

The text does not actually tell the reader what the pilgrims are doing, nor are they given any explanation of the presence of the "African woman".[52] At crucial points the motif word "unsayable"[53] crops up to put a barrier between Marlow's story and the reader, and the absence of a name for the Intended conspires to give the message that, echoing many biblical references, it is best not to know. Conrad has the Harlequin say, "It was dangerous to enquire too much",[54] and Marlow says, "I don't want to know anything of the ceremonies used."[55] The Intended's name could be told on three occasions but is not. The question becomes, is Straus's analysis in terms of male-female the correct secret or one that follows after the existence of another prior secret? This thesis suggests that the latter is the case. The male-female split is not the "idea": it is a secondary notion on the same level as the suggestion given by Watt. It is an interpretation.

Gekoski does concentrate on the "idea" introduced by Conrad's letter and identifies the idea specifically with existential angst. He concentrates on the passage where Marlow and Kurtz have a battle of wills, picking out from Marlow's description of it significant phrases: "a being to whom I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low"; "There was nothing either above or below him"; "He had kicked himself loose from the earth"; and particularly, "He was alone."[56] Gekoski concludes that Kurtz is "a fully autonomous man, attempting to generate

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52 Straus, "The Exclusion of the Intended from Secret Sharing", p. 50.
53 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 127 and p. 147 for examples.
54 Ibid., p. 118.
55 Ibid., p. 121.
56 Ibid., pp. 131-132.

and enact his own moral truths, confronting the results of freedom".[57] He then concludes that Marlow's description of Kurtz as "hollow at the core" shows Kurtz has recognised the "final meaninglessness of all things"[58] and contrasts this with the "fools" of the story who have no "imagination". Gekoski is not, however, content to leave it here. He asks a further question: given that a person is "an initiate into this deepest knowledge….what is he to do with it?"[59] The question can be applied either to Kurtz or to Marlow. Gekoski concludes that "Kurtz…sees too much, too clearly, to live through it",[60] whereas Marlow ultimately finds himself, despite his avowed hatred for it, "forced into a position in which an absolute lie seems necessary".[61]

Gekoski then, like Watt, looks for and finds the answer in the final meeting between Marlow and the Intended. He contrasts Marlow's claim to hate lying, "because it appals me",[62] with his series of equivocations to the Intended. The crucial equivocation comes when the grief-stricken woman pleads with Marlow to reveal Kurtz's last words and he responds "the last word he pronounced was - your name".[63] The reason for this is generally given, as for example by Ian Watt above, that it protects the woman; to enable her to live with her own illusion since she would not have the "necessary grounds in her own experience"[64] to carry on.

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57 Gekoski, "*Heart of Darkness*", p. 70.
58 Ibid., p. 73.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., p. 74.
62 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness,* p. 79.
63 Ibid., p. 147.
64 Watt, "*Heart of Darkness* and Nineteenth Century Thought", p. 84.

However, Gekoski rereads it with what he calls "a final ironic possibility".[65] He argues that "the 'Horror' and the name of Kurtz's Intended may be identical".[66] The horror does represent the void, the emptiness, the nothingness of the darkness at the heart but it also represents the horror in everyday life in the sense that the Intended lives it. However, Gekoski does not identify the Intended with the universal. His reading of the novella ends with the claim that the truth is not just unendurable but it is "unendurable in the context of everyday life". He goes on: "what one needs in order to maintain an assurance of safety and comfort is some *sustaining illusion* to which one can be faithful."[67] In a way Gekoski is in agreement with Watt. They both portray Marlow as a hero who *knows* saving the Intended who does not. Gekoski is just more specific about what the Intended is being saved from. This conclusion could have been reached directly from the title for Kurtz's loved one which, to say the least, is a strange one. Because it is strange, it might be considered to carry a double meaning. It might mean exactly what it says, *intended*, as well as to be married. If so, then Gekoski's conclusion that Marlow's "lie" links the double use of the word "Horror" with "your [the Intended's] name" can be extended so that "your name" comes to mean *both* horror *and* the text is intentional.

The thesis accepts Gekoski's argument as far as it goes, but thinks it does not go far enough. It thinks he slips back from the natural conclusion of his

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65 Gekoski, "*Heart of Darkness*", p. 74.
66 Ibid., p. 75.
67 Ibid., p.75. My emphasis.

argument by making two slips. The thesis will return to this point and deduce its own conclusion at the end of this chapter.

Meanwhile the reader who accepts the possibility of intention can look back on the text, or use a second reading, to find confirmation that it has been telling them this over and over again. Marlow has spent some of the earlier part of *Heart of Darkness* dividing the world up into two types of "reality". First he describes the mundane "efficiency"[68] of everyday tasks, later described as the "surface truth"[69] of life. Then, slowly, he begins to ask himself "what it all meant"[70] as he becomes involved with the "darkness" associated with the strangeness of his experience as he moves further up the river. The surface truth is then separated from the inner truth which is "hidden - luckily".[71] He also divides people into two types: those that can and those that can't. For Marlow there can be no doubt that all these perceptions - since they are reported by him - cannot be accidental or unconscious. They must be taken to be what Cedric Watts has called "imaginatively intentional".[72] If this is so but still the "idea" is not noticed because it is too well hidden under the "secondary notions", then within the structure of *Heart of Darkness* there must be a process of hiding and this too can be credited as "imaginatively intentional". Ian Watt, Nina Pelikan Straus and R.A. Gekoski then are, in the view of this thesis, concerned with the same thing: a reinterpretation of the text. The finding of Conrad's "it" is what Marlow would call the "surface" of

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68 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 51.
69 Ibid., p. 89.
70 Ibid., p. 73.
71 Ibid., p. 89.
72 Cedric Watts, *The Deceptive Text: An Introduction to Covert Plots*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984, p.15.

things, Kermode calls the "manifest", Cedric Watts calls the "overt" and both the modernist novel and the ESDeN might call the individual. Cedric Watts, in contrast, does the opposite. He concentrates on the process of hiding with his invention of the covert plot and shows no particular interest in the surface manifestations of alternative readings. This thesis takes the same view because it associates the covert plotting with the hiding of existential futility and sees this as a universal necessity. It has been noted, in chapter 1, that an ESDeS, and hence a covert plot, will be signalled first by genre-marking.

Genre-Marking

Genre-markers mean low-key indicators that are capable of being picked up on a first reading. There is a great deal of marking included in *Heart of Darknes*s. It is discussed below under three headings: uneasiness, absurdity and hiding.

(i) Uneasiness

Heart of Darkness is so concerned with the idea of ESD that it uses several techniques to instigate anxiety in the reader. These include ambiguity in the title, use of the motif word, the involvement of self-deception and collusion.

The title of the story - *Heart of Darkness* - is the first thing a reader comes across and its form suggests confusion is involved even before they start to read the

body of the text. Cedric Watts describes the title, but could be describing self-deception: "the title *Heart of Darkness* offers not simply alternative readings in retrospect, but also, from the start, a certain disturbing mysteriousness through the immediate possibility of alternative glosses."[73] The confusion originated with Conrad himself who changed the title between the story's publication in magazine form and its subsequent book form. It changed from *The Heart of Darkness* to *Heart of Darkness*[74] and in either form allows at least three interpretations With the "The", the title suggests that "Darkness" is the noun (and "heart of" adjectival) and refers to a specific geographical location. The story will, in this case, involve movement to the location and once there it will not be pleasant. However, without the "The" it is "heart" which is read as the noun and which, therefore, suggests an anthropomorphic reading in which the reader's enquiry is directed to a human being with a sinister or evil heart. The third interpretation of the title is a little more obscure. Suppose that both "Heart" and "Darkness" are intended as nouns metaphorically related to each other so that the title could be read as the "heart *is* darkness". If so, the title is not referring to a geographical location or to the psychology of a person but to the solar death theme. Conrad wrote "the fate of humanity condemned ultimately to perish from cold is not worth troubling about".[75] If so, then a better term than existential "man" is provided by Spittles's term, "entropic man"[76] which describes not just a "man" doomed to a futile passion but to describe a "man" living in a world doomed to thermodynamic nothingness.

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[73] Watts, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, p.9. The following text relies heavily on this work.

[74] Ibid., p. 9.

[75] Letter to Cunningham Graham 14th January 1898, in Karl and Davies (eds), *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. 2, 1898-1902,* p. 17.

[76] Brian Spittles, *Joseph Conrad,* London: Macmillan, 1992, p. 154.

There is support for this extreme existentialist view. The opening of the narrative makes this view textually explicit: "the sun sank low…as if about to go out suddenly."[77] If this were to happen, the "darkness"[78] that would ensue would undeniably make explicit the concept of existential futility. This interpretation again brings to the foreground Marlow's "culminating point of his experience" which threw "a kind of light on everything about me – and into my thoughts.…not very clear. And yet it seemed to throw a kind of light."[79] Since seeing the light usually means understanding, Marlow's point is that "lack of clarity" or "darkness" or "nothing" *is* the answer. Marlow puts it more gently but reinforces the title's initial hint that the meaning at the end of his quest is that there is no meaning. It is no wonder that anxiety is generated. At best there is ambiguity, at worst there is certainty.

This is built upon. Once beyond the title, and the framings, even the most cursory reader will be struck by the constant use of the word "uneasy" in its various forms. Marlow "began to feel slightly uneasy"[80] whilst applying for the job of steamer captain. Nevertheless he gets the job and travels to the Central Station where he meets its manager who again "inspired uneasiness. That was it! Uneasiness. Not a definite mistrust – just uneasiness – nothing more."[81] The manager did not only inspire uneasiness in others he was, or so he claims, "very,

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77 Ibid., p. 48.
78 Ibid., p. 148.
79 Ibid., p. 52.
80 Ibid., p. 57.
81 Ibid., p. 71-72.

very uneasy"[82] himself with respect to saving Kurtz. The sense of uneasiness is so pervasive in Marlow's story it penetrates even to his listeners and through them to the story's subsequent readers. The anonymous narrator of *Heart of Darkness* reports:

> The others might have been asleep, but I was awake. I listened, I listened on the watch for the sentence, for the word, that would give me the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by the narrative that seemed to shape itself without human lips in the heavy night-air of the river.[83]

Uneasiness can, of course, be present in other types of telling. For an ESDeS it is just a first step. The uneasiness has to, in addition, coexist and cooperate with the presence of self-deception. Self-deception can be a simple naming. Various alternative names have been suggested, such as "pipedream" and "saving lie". *Heart of Darkness* is no different in this respect and adds to the collection. The Intended begs of Marlow to give her "something - something - to - to live with",[84] Marlow is happy to allow her a "great and saving illusion"[85] and Gekoski uses the term "sustaining illusion"[86] to sum up the Intended and Marlow's collusion at the end of the novel.

More particularly, self-deception is connected with behaviour identifiers of self-deception such as post-hoc recognition, refusing to recognise evidence against an existing overt idea, the generation of supporting evidence and the excessive

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82 Ibid., p. 73.
83 Ibid., p. 80.
84 Ibid., p. 147.
85 Ibid., p. 145.
86 Gekoski, "*Heart of Darkness*" p. 75.

emotional content at the point of recognition of a hidden idea. Marlow seems to exhibit all of these behaviours. Marlow suspects the manager's "murder plot"[87] but overlooks it. He retrospectively realises this: "I did not see the real significance of the wreck at once. I fancy I see it now"; "Certainly the affair was too stupid - when I think of it - to be altogether natural."[88] These are perhaps limited admissions for he adds shortly afterwards, "Afterwards I took it [the assumption that the manager was an 'idiot'] back when it was borne upon me startlingly with what extreme nicety he had estimated the time requisite for the 'affair'."[89] Retrospective storytelling is ideal for relating personal self-deception. Here Marlow clearly admits the evidence was available and he chose to overlook it and recognises this when he looks back on it. In addition, he manages also to include a feeling – "startlingly"[90] - at his point of recognition.

Normal-self-deception works only if friends and family accept the deceiver's description of events. In the telling of *Heart of Darkness* this role falls to the listeners and the readers. The quote above, from the first narrator, allows for this collusion – "The others might have been asleep" - at the same time as distancing the narrator. The reader therefore is free to choose. On another occasion, Marlow is so rude that a listener is forced to respond. When Marlow accuses them of doing what they do for "half-a-crown a tumble", a listener

87 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 119 et seq.
88 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 71.
89 Ibid., p. 73.
90 Ibid.

responds with "Try to be civil, Marlow."[91] It is interesting to note that it is another listener this time, for the anonymous narrator pipes up with "I knew there was at least one listener awake besides myself."[92] This passage stresses that Marlow is being told that he, too, if he wants their collusion with his storytelling, must be cooperative. If he goes too far there will be a rebellion.

(ii) Absurdity

In addition to uneasiness and hints of self-deception, an ESDeS requires existential marking. This can come in many guises. Campbell and Collision put it rather well after analysing the passage in Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Reprieve* (1945) where Mathieu considers committing suicide. They say:

> That passage contains many characteristics typical of existential sensibility: a sense of solitariness, alienation, and lack of meaning; of the strangeness of matter and things; of the apparent contingency and pointlessness of life; of one's inward self as a kind of nothingness that longs to exist as an incorrigibly real being that has both physical presence and meaning; of the anguish of recognising that human freedom is total but also meaningless because, in the end, there is nothing, neither grounds nor reasons, to determine one's choices of actions and values.[93]

It is only necessary, it is argued, for sufficient existential references, of whatever form, to be present to leave a reasonable person aware that the text concerns itself with the question of meaning. *Heart of Darkness* is, however, *saturated* with existential references.

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91 Ibid., p. 89.
92 Ibid.
93 Robert Campbell and Diane Collison, *Ending Lives*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988, p. 79.

In its most manifest form, Marlow specifically states he conceives himself to be apart from the others in the story. The first narrator says of him "he did not represent his class"[94] and he says of himself: "I am not in the least typical."[95] He also specifically asks the existential question, "I asked myself sometimes what it all meant."[96] He answers himself, on another occasion: "It occurred to me that my speech or my silence, indeed any action of mine, would be a mere futility."[97] And again, immediately after Kurtz's death, Marlow meditates: "Droll thing life is - the mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose."[98] Kurtz himself, despite tricking many people, including Marlow, with his importance and attributes, is ultimately described as "hollow at the core"[99] and dismissed by Marlow as merely a voice: "The voice was gone. What else had there been?"[100] Nina Pelikan Straus puts it differently but with the same effect. She says Kurtz reduces "male heroism to the horror of emptiness".[101] Gekoski, as has already been seen, regards *Heart of Darkness* as dealing with the "recognition of the ultimate futility of life".[102] This futility is seen to extend beyond the individual and apply to everybody as an inevitable fact. Arriving at the Central Station the text provides a series of sentences implying this more general futility: "I came upon a boiler wallowing in the grass" and "an undersized railway-truck lying there on its back

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94 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 49.
95 Ibid., p. 59.
96 Ibid., p. 73.
97 Ibid., p. 95.
98 Ibid., p. 137.
99 Ibid., p. 121.
100 Ibid., p. 137.
101 Straus, "The Exclusion of the Intended from Secret Sharing", p. 51.
102 Gekoski, "*Heart of Darkness*", p. 58.

with its wheels in the air".[103] Technological intervention is seen as of short duration against the relentless and overwhelming power of nature.

This general futility shades into the absurd in its surreal usage. Marlow's description of his trip down the African coast is an example:

> We pounded along, stopped, landed soldiers; went on, landed custom house clerks to levy toll in what looked like a God-forsaken wilderness, with a tin shed and a flag-pole lost in it; landed more soldiers - to take care of the custom-house clerks, presumably. Some, I heard, got drowned in the surf; but whether they did or not, nobody seemed particularly to care. They were just flung out there, and on we went.[104]

However, when used in connection with existentialism, the word "absurd" is linked in particular to the arbitrariness of choice. Nevertheless, it is a word, like self-deception, that is often misunderstood because speaker and listener mix up its alternate meanings. The text is aware of this and uses Marlow to expresses this alternation in the "throwing of the shoes overboard" scene. Marlow is addressing, in addition to his trapped audience, a "pilgrim in pink pyjamas".[105] The passage is, perhaps, a pivotal point in the story. It follows the death of Marlow's helmsman, which presages the point of recognition. Marlow at his point in the story thinks "Mr. Kurtz is dead as well" and describes his feeling as:

> For the moment that was the dominant thought. There was a sense of extreme disappointment, as though I had found out I had been striving after something altogether without substance. I couldn't have been more disgusted if I had travelled all this way for the sole purpose of talking to Mr. Kurtz.[106]

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103 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness,* p. 63.
104 Ibid., p. 60.
105 Ibid., p. 105.
106 Ibid., p. 106.

The text that follows enables the two meanings of absurd to be disentangled. It gives, in turn, his obsessive attention to the comic scene relating to his shoes and the deeper level in which Marlow is separating himself from normality. He starts by flinging "one shoe overboard" and follows later with "the other shoe [which] went flying unto the devil-god of the river". In between he expands on his increasing awareness of what the trip *up* the river means to him

> [I] became aware that that was exactly what I had been looking forward to - a talk with Kurtz. I made the strange discovery that I had never imagined him as doing, you know, but as discoursing. I didn't say to myself, "Now I will never see him," or "Now I will never shake him by the hand," but "Now I will never hear him." The man presented himself as a voice. Not of course that I did not connect with some sort of action. Hadn't I been told in all the tones of jealousy and admiration that he had collected, battered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than all the other agents together. That was not the point. The point was in his being a gifted creature, and that of all his gifts the one that stood out pre-eminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words - the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted and the most contemptible, the pulsating stream of light, or the deceitful flow from the heart of an impenetrable darkness.[107]

The switching back and forth is a representation of the narrative-consciousness struggling to decide which plot to adopt; both p and not-p are actually sequentially present; existential anguish and project struggle for supremacy. The character, Marlow, identifies Kurtz with a desperate attempt to hold on to external meaning and then returns to shoes. This project does not have the power to hold his attention and he quickly returns to the struggle with the possibility of loss of meaning connected with the supposed death of Kurtz: "By Jove! It's all over. We

[107] Ibid.

are too late; he has vanished – the gift has vanished."[108] The implications of this are horrible. He has to face the consequences of facing up to the loss: it will separate him from the normality of the rest of humanity. He shrinks from this. He recognises the need for his audience and recognises its presence and the need for normality: "Why do you sigh in this beastly way, somebody? Absurd? Well, absurd. Good Lord! mustn't a man ever - Here, give me some tobacco."[109]

He quickly reverts to the existential meaning of absurdity by spelling out his unambiguous rejection of their bourgeois existence:

> "Absurd!" he cried. "This is the worst of trying to tell. . . .Here you all are, each moored with two good addresses, like a hulk with two anchors, a butcher round one corner, a policeman round another, excellent appetites, and a temperature normal - you hear - normal from year's end to year's end. Absurd! Absurd be - exploded!"

But this is risky. The text has Marlow flip back to surreal absurdity: "Absurd! My dear boys, what can you expect from a man who out of sheer nervousness had just flung overboard a pair of new shoes."[110]

The passage continues with the same alternating sequence until Marlow makes a dismissive remark with respect to the Intended in particular and to women in general: "They – the women I mean – are out of it – should be out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own."[111] This would seem to

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108 Ibid.
109 Ibid., p. 107.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.

support those that view Marlow as a misogynist but this passage is an example of Conradian delayed decoding. He leads the reader to one point of view and then contradicts it. Here he adds to this (seemingly) pejorative statement, the self-serving addition, "lest ours gets worse".[112] Once again the text makes it clear that even if Marlow is contemptuous of his fellow humans he needs them to maintain his project.

The text now, having made it plain that he considers the possibility of man's absurdity in the face of the universe and infinity, could leave it there. If it did it would qualify for a fairly respectable modernist novel. However an ESDeS needs the reader to proceed with reading the story. In short, having persuaded the reader that life *is* absurd, he has now to persuade them to forget this realisation. The text makes it easy for them by giving them permission to suspend their awareness of existential knowledge by making periodic references to the need for hiding. Once again it does this in abundance with all manner of mechanisms.

(iii) Hiding

Normally a reader might expect a storyteller to have some meaning to impart. If so it is referred to in the first few pages in a strange way. It is referred to as "not the kernel", the "haze" twice, "moonshine", "not worth knowing" and "incomprehensible". In short, the text, before the story starts, tells the reader, if the reader wants to hear, that although the story might seem to be a grail quest it is

[112] Ibid., p. 108.

nothing of the sort. It is about a division into two with a necessary choice between them. It introduces Marlow's framed story with an interchange between an anonymous (first) narrator and Marlow. This allows two versions of what is relevant to be introduced. Marlow says, "I don't want to bother you much about what happened to me personally."[113] The narrator disagrees. He suggests Marlow is deceiving himself for his story is exactly what his hearers want to hear: "so many tellers of tales seem so often unaware of what their audience would best like to hear."[114] The same narrator observes another apparently contradictory pair when he says of Marlow: "to him the meaning of an episode was not the inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine."[115] The need for the division soon becomes clear for since it is not meaning which is to be discovered it follows that there is nothing that can be discovered. The narrator says of the ubiquitous seaman: "after his hours of work, a casual stroll or a casual spree on shore suffices to unfold for him the secret of a whole continent, and generally he finds the secret not worth knowing."[116] Marlow then takes over the introduction. He introduces a hypothetical "decent young citizen" who has "to live in the midst of the incomprehensible".[117] The text then disentangles this apparent blockage and foregrounds the futility of life. This, once established, is removed. Listeners and the reader are told to forget the discovery: "Mind none of us [the Lawyer, the Accountant, the Director and the

113 Ibid., p. 52.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid., p. 50.
116 Ibid.
117 Ibid., p. 51.

Narrator as well as himself and the reader] would feel exactly like this."[118] The text, as narrative-consciousness, has been fair. It has told the reader, within the first few pages, that the "idea" is the simultaneous presence of two contradictory ideas and that one of them is awareness of existential futility and the other is the project; the story which is to be told. The meaning can be in the kernel *and* outside of it. Lack of clarity *can* simultaneously be light thrown onto the subject. The meaning of the story, therefore, *can* simultaneously be in the overt plot and the covert plot

However the two ideas, although present, need not be given the same immediate significance. Even this is genre-marked by Marlow. The reference appears as commentary at the time of his and his steamer's approach to Kurtz's station: "When you have to attend to things of that sort, [guessing at channels, looking for hidden banks and sunken stones, searching for wood for the boiler.....] to the mere incidents of the surface, the reality - the reality, I tell you - fades. The inner truth is hidden - luckily, luckily." [119] As a technique it, in principle, tells but it actually hides: for the readers may well have forgotten the repetition of "luckily" by the time they come across the echoic repetition of "horror". If so the "inner truth" as "horror" will be successfully hidden and the ESDeS will be successful. Further, the fading is motivated and this is also genre-marked. Marlow points out that "there is a taint of death, a flavour of mortality in lies – which is exactly what I hate and detest in the world – what I want to forget".[120] The normal reader may pick up the markers for unease but by the time they are feeling anxious and

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118 Ibid.
119 Ibid., p. 89
120 Ibid., p. 79.

thinking there might be more to the story than meets the eye, the hiding markers have already been passed by. The thesis, however, plays the part of an abnormal reader. It wants to accept the genre-marking for ESDeS and to go on to discover the covert plot hidden in *Heart of Darkness*

The covert plot, once suspected, will be found to exist between two motivating absences – now called deathlike events or bracketing deaths. The first death will be a minor character who will suggest the plot, based on the idea that "every new character signifies a new plot".[121] In addition, one of the major characters will provide the link between one or more of the substantial overt plots and the covert plot. The covert plot will be confirmed if the second deathlike event causes the elision of one of the characters, breaking the link between the overt and covert plots. The surviving character will then be projected into the future through the mechanism of the unfinished. That is, the surviving character will be taken, by the reader, to survive beyond the end of the fictional universe presented in the text.

In *Almayer's Folly* the task was easy. There were only two deaths: Dain's boatman and then Almayer himself. In *Heart of Darkness* it is more difficult for there are five. In order of appearance these are: the report of Fresleven's death;[122] the Swede captain's story of an unknown Swede "who hanged himself";[123] "the

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121 Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977, p. 70.

122 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 54.

123 Ibid., p. 62.

middle-aged negro, with a bullet-hole in the forehead";[124] the helmsman (of the shoe episode);[125] and Kurtz.[126]

Bracketing Death-like Events

The multiplicity of minor character deaths might, at first sight, seem to be a burden. Certainly the deaths are not relevant to the ongoing quest, although they might be said to add an air of reality. However, it is believed that Conrad would not do things without a better reason, because the work has what Watts calls "tentacular and paradoxical qualities",[127] so the suggestion is that the multiple deaths introduce the idea of repetition which, ultimately, will be seen to point to the need for a story beyond *Heart of Darkness.* Repetition has already been hinted at within the uneasiness section where it is shown that the novella is trapped within the framing on the *Nellie* and the repetitive rising of the sun and the flowing of the tides and further support will be seen to be derived from the frequent repetition of motif words. In addition, as a by-product, the text makes good use of the deaths as further genre-marking.

Fresleven dies first. The telling of his death manages to include markers of absurdity and universality as well as hiding. It also indicates the function of the overt plot as a distracter. His death follows from a misunderstanding between him

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124 Ibid., p. 69.
125 Ibid., p. 104.
126 Ibid., p. 137.
127 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 2.

and the chief of a village over “two black hens”. The captain was perceived as engaged in a “noble cause”,[128] like Kurtz[129] and who, also like Kurtz, after “a couple of years…out there”[130] loses control as Kurtz shows “no restraint”.[131] In the captain’s case the lack of restraint exhibits itself when he starts to beat his opponent. The son of the chief responds by making "a tentative jab” and is surprised to find that what he thought was a “supernatural being” dies. The population of the village scatter leaving the "grass growing though his ribs".[132] Presented like this, Fresleven’s death is an existential marker in the guise of absurdity. Looked at another way, it is really less of a death and more of an opportunity. Marlow stops going on his “own road and on [his] own legs”[133] and instead is said to have “stepped into [someone else’s] shoes”.[134] In this sense he loses his individuality and is represented as just another captain and this doubles as the idea of repetition. The text is seeking to exploit the universality of what is to follow. Marlow is to follow Fresleven immediately and this prepares the reader to follow Marlow who follows Kurtz.

On the other hand, Fresleven is one of only four[135] named people in the book. This seems to suggest that he is not just another captain but, like Marlow, somebody special; different. This restates the separation between the individual and the universal. The difference, in this case, lies in and emphasises, the

128 Ibid., p. 55.
129 See for examples ibid., pp. 68, 76, 88, and 144.
130 Ibid., p. 55.
131 Ibid., p. 111.
132 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
133 Ibid., p. 54.
134 Ibid., p. 55.
135 Not three as given by Watts, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, p. 128.

difference exhibited by Marlow. It is not so much that he is different, but that he perceives himself as different as everyone does when they first become aware of existential futility. If Fresleven were to tell the story of Kurtz, the story of existential futility would be the same but he would solve the existential dilemma with a different ESD. Presented like this, the marker is pointing to the multiplicity of available overt plots. He is both the same and different. In the sense that he is just a repeat then he is universal and he maps onto the covert. In the sense that he perceives himself as different and individual he maps onto the overt. The overt is allowable but the covert must be hidden. Fresleven's death does not overlook this necessity. The mention of his death is accompanied by suggestions of anomalies which, according to Watts, can instigate a search for a covert plot. Marlow, who is primarily a sea water captain, makes a lot of noise about taking a fresh-water post. This deviation from his normal behaviour is especially noticeable since, in order to obtain the post, he has to ask help from a woman, his aunt. Given his expressed misogyny at other points in the text it might be thought that this should be explained and it is not. The covert plot is hinted at and then forgotten.

Marlow hears of Fresleven whilst he is still in Europe but does not hear of the unknown Swede until he starts his trip up river from the coast. This inserted anecdote doubles as a timely reminder that suicide is an alternative to ESDeS. The captain of the "little sea-going steamer" transports him a further thirty miles upstream and comments that "it is funny what some people will do for a few francs

a-month".[136] Marlow replies that he "expected to see that soon" only to have the captain tell him, somewhat cynically: "Don't be too sure…the other day I took up a man [the unknown Swede] who hanged himself."[137] The narrative-consciousness called Conrad cannot resist giving one more hint that it has moved on from Victorian certainty. Marlow, in this view, will not find meaning up the river; he will find there is no meaning. If this were to be the story, then in its ESDeS telling a choice has to be faced. If there is no meaning then life is pointless and rational behaviour demands death from an individual unless they are able to use existential-self-deception to hide the truth by constructing an individual ESDeS. Marlow, who in his fictional universe doesn't yet know this, responds with "Why in God's name?", and the Swede captain answers: "Who knows? The sun too much for him, or the country perhaps".[138] Marlow, and hence the reader, is warned of the dire consequences of not hiding awareness of futility with an ESD. The warning both indicates the presence of a covert plot and the need for hiding it.

The death of the "negro"[139] also doubles the sense of repetition. Marlow "stumbled" upon him or her shortly after he had interacted with another "negro" who was "dying slowly":

> I found nothing else to do but to offer him one of my good Swede's biscuit I had in my pocket. The fingers closed slowly on it and held - there was no other movement and no other glance. He had tied a bit of white worsted round his neck - Why? Where did he get it? Was it a badge - an ornament - a

136 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 62.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid., p. 63.
139 Ibid., p. 69.

> charm - a propitiatory act? It looked startling round his black neck, this bit of white thread from beyond the seas.[140]

It is the third death in a very few pages and it occurs within the context of a sense of absurdity.

The last of the minor character deaths is that of the helmsman and because it is the last of the motivating deaths, it must introduce the relevant story. His particular death is the instigator of Marlow's "absurd" speech during which the helmsman is described as being "just like Kurtz",[141] and the Intended's name is introduced for the first time.[142] The helmsman's death, therefore, links Marlow to Kurtz and through Kurtz to the Intended.

The process of recognition that proceeds the covert plotting and the process of narration that follow may seem to be parts of a *particular* story but they are not. It is only special because, although many could have been told, this one actually has been told. Any one of the other four deaths could also have served the purpose of motivating a following story. The story that is told, therefore, is a matter of choice. This gives more meaning to the disagreement between the frame narrator and Marlow. Marlow is correct when he says his story is not about him "personally", but the narrator is right too. The listeners do not want to hear the story - of existential futility - he is really trying to tell. They already know this story. They want to hear the cover story: the story in the overt plot and any story

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140 Ibid., p. 66.
141 Ibid., p. 111.
142 A painting of her is introduced earlier (Ibid., p. 76).

will do. They want to, like Marlow himself, "forget"[143] but it is not easy. They have to do so over and over again. Within a novella it would not be possible tell the story four times, but the four precipitating deaths imply that it will, eventually, have to be told four times and more.

In addition to the repetitive sun, tides and deaths, the text uses repetition of words. Cause and effect, as in Watts's template argument, may be bi-directional. Repetition of words may draw attention to the repetitive deaths or the repetitive deaths may encourage the reader to give importance to word repetition. The phrase given universal critical significance by many commentators is "The Horror! The Horror" so this might be regarded as the template. It has upper-case letters so the horror being referred to is not just any horror but *The* Horror. That is, the existential and unavoidable and unsayable horror. Based on this, there are numerous other examples which gain in significance by comparison. "The inner truth is hidden - luckily, luckily",[144] indicates an important truth – not just any truth. It is legitimate, therefore, to assume the truth referred to is the same truth as represented by "The Horror"; the awareness of existential futility. "Absurd! Absurd"[145] indicates that the existential version, and not the comic version, is to be taken as the relevant meaning in the context. "He [the helmsman] had no restraint, no restraint – just like Kurtz"[146] tells the reader that if he, and Kurtz, had "left that shutter alone"[147] the "arrow" of existential awareness would not have been able to

143 Ibid., p. 79.
144 Ibid., p. 89.
145 Ibid., p. 107.
146 Ibid., p, 111.
147 Ibid.

get in and cause its inevitable damage. By the end the repetitions are becoming *desperately* repetitive: "I [the Intended] shall never see him again…never, never, never."[148] This is true because, as the thesis shall shortly show, the Intended represents seriousness. She opts for permanency and will never allow herself to visit the point of recognition again. Marlow, on the other hand, will have to repeat his story over and over and over again: as long as he represents the ESDeS method.

The final death is unambiguous. It is that of Kurtz. He dies, as has already been argued, with ambiguity on his lips for the reader is not actually told what his dying words represent. It is known, however, that Marlow survives him - but only just: "And then they very nearly buried me."[149] Clearly Conrad wants us to believe that the survival was a choice. Marlow has chosen to live. But it is not seen by him as unambiguously good: "I remained to dream the nightmare out to the end."[150] This nightmare derives from his now unavoidable clash with futility.[151] Marlow dwells on his suspended illness for some time and reports its conclusion to his audience: "No, they did not bury me, though there is a period of time which I remember mistily, with a shuddering wonder, like a passage through some inconceivable world that had no hope in it and no desire."[152] How he avoids following Kurtz is by accommodating the sense of futility which Kurtz could not. This is achieved by the process of hiding and is demonstrated by the covert

148 Ibid., p. 146.
149 Ibid., p. 137.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid., p. 139.

plotting. It is available so the narrative-consciousness knows about it but it is well hidden.

Covert Plotting

A covert plot is not the same as a main or subplot for it is designed to resist many readings although, in the normal course of reading, it will only need to resist one or two. In the first reading, Marr suggests, "we experience the swirl of currents where knowing and not-knowing meet" and "the book we shut after the first reading remains closed forever"[153] for "you cannot step into the same flow of reading twice".[154] If there is a second reading it "is the thanks deserved by every author who smuggles more into the lines than one can casually absorb".[155] Not only does *Heart of Darkness* fall into this category, it also contains a wealth of material for further discovery through further readings, but only an "arrogant"[156] writer would expect more than a second reading from a normal reader. Given that it is unlikely that a text will be read more than twice *and* there is no motive to find a covert plot *and* there is no lack of other stories to read, the covert plot will not be found by the average reader. Cedric Watts claims that he only realised there was a covert plot in *Almayer's Folly* after reading it "for perhaps the fourth time"[157] and that Ian Watt,

153 Michael Marr, "The Ordeals of Fire and Water", *New Left Review* 2, Mar-Apr 2000, p. 102.
154 Ibid., p. 100.
155 Ibid.
156 Ibid., p. 99.
157 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 47.

despite allocating thirty-three pages to the analysis of *Almayer's Folly*, "does not even mention the name of Abdulla".[158]

If the covert plot is deliberately hidden, not intended to be found and not likely to be found, there seems no reason for the inclusion of a covert plot. Watts realises this: "since [its] reticence does not conceal, what is its purpose?"[159] He goes on to suggest a number of reasons. This thesis calls them: the training, exemplary or didactic reason,[160] the empirical reason,[161] the subliminal or template reason, and the moral or dialectical reason.[162] At this point in the argument he would use the template argument in regard to what he calls the murder plot within *Heart of Darkness.*[163] That is, the covert plot, when discovered, "subliminally"[164] tells the reader how to read the main plot. Watts argues that the murder plot reflects the Darwinian argument of the survival of the fittest. Kurtz's death is better described as a murder and this is achieved by doing nothing to prevent disease. Once this is recognised the overt plot can be read, purposefully, as equally red in tooth and claw, with the Europeans exploiting the native Africans. This seems perverse. It relies on a doubtful psychological premise and does nothing that the overt plot could not do on its own. This thesis argues that the template can

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158 Ibid.

159 Watts, *Conrad's Heart of Darkness*, p. 50. Watts refers here to Conrad's evasiveness with respect to geographical locations but it exactly describes the position.

160 This is discussed by this thesis in the section "The near ESDeS reading of Conrad's *Almayer's Folly*" and, by Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 2.

161 This is discussed by this thesis immediately above and in Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 47 and extensively in the chapter entitled *Thinks.*

162 This is discussed by the thesis, below, and in Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 29 and p. 34.

163 See Cedric Watts, "*Heart of Darkness*: The Covert Murder Plot - Plot and the Darwinian Theme", *Conradiana*, 1975, May, VII, p.142.

164 Ibid.

work, however, but by going the other way round. Once the overt plot is interpreted in an ESDeS process way, the covert plot, when discovered, can be re-examined. If this is done it is found that the murder plot is not so simple. It carries more meaning than this and this becomes significant for the final brick in the intentional and collusive ESDeS wall.

This thesis, then, is in a different position from the normal reader because it is actively looking for the covert plot and is committed to *not* forgetting it. It is helped in the first task by having, at its disposal, a theoretical foundation and it is helped in the second by resisting its instructions. The foundation of the theory has already been indicated. Conrad is only a particular name for a particular narrative-consciousness. A novel written by "Conrad", therefore, could be written using the same techniques used by the same narrative-consciousness. If the "Conrad" narrative-consciousness is an ESDeS then *Heart of Darkness* could be an ESDeN. If so, there will need to be a split to enable p and not-p to separate. In this case Marlow, the central narrator, is set against Kurtz, the character that is superficially seen as the focus of the story. He exists only as an aspect of the overall narrative-consciousness in which Marlow will be the representative of the surviving part of the consciousness. Gekoski essentially thinks this too: "Kurtz's crucial role in the tale lies in his symbolic importance: in the representative quality of his history [and] in his role as a final incarnation of the darkness itself."[165] Since, then, Marlow *and* Mr. Kurtz are aspects of the same overall narrative-consciousness and Marlow, manifestly, is not dead - because he is telling the story - what can be

[165] Gekoski, "*Heart of Darkness*", p. 58.

inferred? It can be inferred that it is the knowledge that Kurtz possessed that is dead and, as a corollary, the aspect that is Marlow is enabled to survive. Existential futility has been recognised and has to be hidden (Marlow walks away: he "left the cabin"[166]). The argument now becomes interesting. The question now becomes "how is this *existential* description of separation to be hidden so that the reader can collude in the process?" The answer is to mirror this statement with a plot separation. In this case the plot separation involves a plot that substantiates the collusive nature of the exercise. The covert plot tells of a "murder plot" which becomes, on inspection, an intentional or "collusive death plot".

Watts, who originated the idea of covert plot and suggested "Abdulla's stratagem"[167] in *Almayer's Folly,* also suggested what he calls "the murder plot"[168] for *Heart of Darkness.* It is instructional to follow his reasoning. Watts suggests that Kurtz, in *Heart of Darkness*, is the victim of devious machinations contrived by the manager who wants Kurtz to die so that he can inherit the lucrative ivory trade established by Kurtz at the Inner Station. This, as far as it goes, correctly identifies the locus of the covert plot. But Watts does not go far enough. He identifies the manager's contribution but misses out on the participation of both Kurtz and Marlow. By doing so, he misses the essence of the plot.

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166 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness,* p. 137.

167 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 47.

168 The following is based on Watts, "*Heart of Darkness*: The Covert Murder Plot - Plot and the Darwinian Theme", p.142.

Kurtz operated from the Inner Station which is many miles upstream and dependant upon supplies from the Central and Outer Stations. These supplies had not been provided for some time and, since Kurtz is reported to be ill, it seems to be necessary to save or rescue him. The manager plans to do this by sailing a steamer up the river. This is an anomaly, for it would appear to be the manager's job to supply the agents and no explanation for why he has not done so is offered; the terms *save* or *rescue* are, therefore, out of place. However, leaving this aside or, rather, accepting it as given, Watts identifies a number of textual comments which in themselves mean little but which collectively make a case for the alleged murder. Marlow arrives at the company's Central Station to finds his boat wrecked. This is not necessarily significant because everything in the station is badly done: the gate of the station is a "neglected gap",[169] the station's brick maker "did not make bricks"[170] and to put out a fire, water is carried in a pail which has "a hole in the bottom".[171] In contrast to this, the station had "an air of plotting",[172] one plot of which, Watts claims, was "the manager's plot to accelerate Kurtz's death".[173] Various hints of this are given. Marlow's ship is damaged by the manager (and a volunteer skipper) a mere two days before Marlow arrives. Watts implies that this must have been deliberate as there was no sudden need. Kurtz had not been resupplied for a year, so two more days would not have mattered, especially when professional help was known to be close by. The repair is delayed for a full three months, as accurately predicted by the manager, when it could have been done

169 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 81, p. 70.
170 Ibid., p. 80.
171 Ibid., p. 74.
172 Ibid., p. 75.
173 Watts, "*Heart of Darkness*: The Covert Murder Plot - Plot and the Darwinian Theme", p. 137.

much quicker if the necessary rivets had been supplied earlier. The brick maker, who serves the manager as a secretary, does not exactly say so but implies the delay is due to the manager not including a request in his letters to the coast. The brick maker says, in effect, it is not my fault for "I write from dictation."[174] Finally, Marlow overhears the manager talking to his uncle and the talk makes it clear that it is only Kurtz who stands in the way of the manager's promotion. The manager's uncle then makes the significant comment - "trust to this"[175] - pointing at the jungle. The meaning of this remark was made clear several pages earlier when the manager was heard to say that "men who come out here should have no entrails."[176] He means that Kurtz, like most Europeans, seems unable to cope with the jungle without succumbing to illness. It is only necessary to do "nothing" for his murderous intent to be fulfilled.

Watts has collated the "various scattered hints"[177] well. He is able to make an effective cumulative argument. However, the argument falls short in a number of ways. The first concerns the participation of Kurtz and is identified by Todd Gray Willey, who shows that Watts misses both supporting and conflicting evidence. He quotes the use of the harlequin's statement that Kurtz "was shamefully abandoned"[178] which, clearly, supports the murder claim. He also draws attention to the fact that the text makes very clear that Kurtz was not trapped

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174 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 81.
175 Ibid., p. 87.
176 Ibid., p. 72.
177 Watts, "*Heart of Darkness*: The Covert Murder Plot - Plot and the Darwinian Theme", p. 137.
178 Todd Gray Willey, "The 'Shamefully Abandoned' Kurtz: A Rhetorical Context for *Heart of Darkness*", *Conradiana*, 1978, Summer, pp 99-112. The original quote is from Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 122.

and dependent on rescue. He had earlier made a trip down the river - and back - on his own. He had delivered vast quantities of ivory in a fleet of canoes and "had apparently intended to come himself, the station being by that time bare of goods and stores, but after coming three hundred miles, had suddenly decided to go back".[179] There seems no doubt, therefore, that if he has been isolated for more than a year at the Inner Station it was as a matter of choice. If he had wanted to seek medical aid it was well within his power to have obtained it. He was able to make the trip "alone in a small dug-out with four paddlers".[180] The manager may have wanted Kurtz dead but, equally, Kurtz appears not to have wanted to save himself. If letting someone else die deserves the name murder, then letting oneself die deserves the name suicide.

It will be recalled that Watts's generation of a covert plot structure draws the question from the astute reader, "why bother?" Three of his answers have already been discussed. A fourth reason is provided when he suggests that "the moral value of literary works lies in their dialectical rather than their exemplary force: in other words, in the effectiveness of their challenges to moral presuppositions rather than in their commendation of any readily-definable moral positions."[181] He expands, later, on what he means by this: the "moral implications [of the covert plot in *The Secret Agent*] work against, and substantially contradict, the moral implications of the main plot."[182] Watts essentially means, as does

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179 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 85.
180 Ibid., pp. 85-86.
181 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 29.
182 Ibid., p. 34.

Gekoski, a conflict between the individual and the society, but the argument applies equally to a conflict within an individual narrative-consciousness. Further, the conflict need not just be between the covert and the overt plot. The conflict can be, as it is here, mirrored in both. The manager's "murder" is not a clear-cut murder. It relies on the conflating of "letting die" with "motivated murder". It is further conflicted here because Kurtz would appear to collude in his own death. The death might be now regarded as suicide if the conflation "allowing to be killed" is the same as "suicide". There is a further – and much more significant - dimension which is also overlooked by Watts; that is Marlow's participation in Kurtz's death, for *Heart of Darkness* is "as much about Marlow as about Kurtz".[183] The manager is only a minor character who links Marlow with Kurtz – and, through Kurtz, links Marlow with the Intended. Marlow's participation in the death has the ESDeS effect of moving the reading away from either a legal or a moral dimension onto an existential one. But, to get to this point requires a digression into moral philosophy.

To be comfortable with the title of Watts's covert plot, then, requires the equating of "murder" with "letting die". It is not clear whether this is permissible either in general or in a particular case for there does seem to be a moral difference between the two. Campbell and Collison say, "Not jumping into the canal to save someone from drowning (assuming you could) may be reprehensible but does not seem, on the face of it, to be morally equivalent to pushing them in, in the first

[183] Gekoski, "*Heart of Darkness*", p. 58.

place, intending them to drown."[184] Rachels provides a more clearly analysable situation – equivalent to the Rylean character - which seeks to locate where the difference, if any, lies:

> Smith and Jones both stand to make a lot of money when their six-year old cousin dies. They plan, separately, to kill him. If we suppose two cases, then in the first, Smith gets to him first while he is in the bath and holds his head under the water until he dies. In the second, Jones gets to him first but, before he can drown him, the child slips, bangs his head and falls, unconscious, with his head under the water. Jones waits, ready to hold his head under the water should the child recover, but this proves unnecessary. Smith drowns the child. Jones lets the child drown when he could have saved him.[185]

The example seems to locate the difference between being causally and morally responsible. Most people might be happy to accept that both Smith and Jones were morally responsible, but Rachels argues that both are also causally responsible in the sense that both could have saved the child if they had acted differently, if they had *chosen* to do so, and both knew this. This argues for a principle of negative responsibility which states that "one is just as responsible for the consequences of one's inactions as for the consequences of one's actions".[186] Campbell and Collison argue, however, that there is a difference between Smith and Jones: that they are both guilty but guilty of different things, with Jones being merely guilty of "gross and self-serving callousness".[187] Although morally reprehensible, he would not be guilty of murder.

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184 Campbell and Collinson, *Ending Lives*, p. 131.

185 James Rachels's view is taken from James Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia", *New England Journal of Medicine*, 292, 1975, pp. 78-80, quoted in ibid., p. 132.

186 Ibid., p. 144.

187 Ibid., p. 139.

In Marlow's case, Kurtz's death did not come about as a direct intentional causal act instigated by Marlow. He was, however, as has been argued above in the uneasiness section of the genre-marking discussion, in possession of the evidence that could have made him aware of the intention the manager had of causing Kurtz's death. Whether or not he was self-deceived, as this discussion suggests, he comes to know the truth at some point for he tells his listeners: "I see it now."[188] If, however, Marlow was not self-deceived and *did* foresee the murder and *did* nothing then this would be the equivalent of standing by as the child drowned in the bath.[189] In other words "foreseeing a murder" and doing nothing can be, but need not be, considered just as culpable as committing the murder. This is especially true since his knowledge of Kurtz's desperate and pressing need for rescue does make his "not caring" about the rivets culpable. Is it possible to suppose that he could have got the rivets quicker? The answer is a very definite "Yes". The text goes out of its way to make this a clear and present proposition. It spells it out in every detail: "There were cases of them [rivets] down at the coast"; "We had plates that would do [to fill the hole in the steamer] but nothing to fasten them with"; "And every week the messenger…letter bag on shoulder and staff in hand, left our station for the coast"; "And several times a week a coast caravan came in with trade goods"; and "Three carriers could have brought all that was wanted to set that steamboat afloat."[190] All of the observers, in these examples, are standing by doing nothing when something could be done. The context of the fictional example

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[188] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 71.

[189] Conrad was clearly concerned with this type of question. He was writing *Lord Jim* (1900) at the same time as *Heart of Darkness* and Jim is put into a situation even closer to the "letting die" scenario.

[190] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, pp. 80-81.

suggests that the text wants the reader to give the doing of "nothing" some importance. It does not stop there. The text shows Marlow to be consciously avoiding the consequences of his inaction by distancing himself from responsibility:

> I had given up worrying myself about the rivets. One's capacity for that kind of folly is more limited than you would suppose. I said Hang! - and let things slide. I had plenty of time for meditation, and now and then I would give some thought to Kurtz. I wasn't very interested in him.[191]

It is sufficient that he should call the affair "stupid" and that capacity to "worry" should be limited to consider Marlow as an inactive murderer. It would appear to be unnecessary to add "I wasn't interested in him": a claim that the text negates, with mammoth repetition. It is a clear lie on par with his lie to the Intended.

There is further textual support for including Marlow as a collusive murderer. He seems to be constantly anticipating Kurtz's death. He, for example, after the death of the helmsman, and for no good reason, except perhaps co-timing, assumes "I suppose Mr Kurtz is dead as well by this time".[192] Second, he seems to be prepared, if necessary, to go further and do the killing himself. During the jungle scene, he directly expresses the possibility that he will kill Kurtz: "I'll smash your head" and "I will throttle you for good."[193] Finally, when Kurtz actually dies, Marlow's behaviour becomes crucial. He does nothing to help: he simply walks out. This makes his behaviour a direct parallel to that of Jones. He may not be

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191 Ibid., p. 84.
192 Ibid., p. 106.
193 Ibid., p. 131.

causally responsible but he certainly can be seen as morally responsible. Marlow is not unaware of this since he tells his listeners: "I believe I was considered brutally callous."[194] "Callous" for not caring is what he wants his listeners to take him as meaning but it is possible to go further and ask why he didn't try to revive Kurtz. As a sailor, Marlow should have been able to attempt this. There had been a "practical manual method of artificial respiration…[since]…the industrial revolution (late 1700s) when coal mining asphyxiations and drowning were frequent".[195] The answer is clear: Marlow wanted Kurtz dead.

It is possible to go still further and suggest that the manager and Marlow are colluding with each other in their murderous intents. Whenever one of them draws attention to the possibility of withdrawing, the other negates it. Early on, the manager, because he is concerned about Kurtz's well-being, suggests "going on at once" but is restrained by Marlow: "I knew, and he knew, that it was impossible."[196] After the attack by Kurtz's "savages", "The manager stood by the wheel murmuring confidentially about the necessity of getting well away down the river before dark at all events, when I [Marlow] saw in the distance a clearing [the Inner Station]."[197] On occasions, too, they seem to reinforce each other's intentions. The manager says "I would be desolated if anything should happen to Mr Kurtz" and Marlow, instead of perceiving the remark as a lie goes out of his

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194 Ibid., p. 137.

195 A. Geddes, "The History of Artificial Respiration", *Engineering in Medicine and Biology Magazine*, IEEE, Vol. 26, Issue 6, Nov-Dec, 2007, pp. 38-41.

196 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 99.

197 Ibid., p. 113.

way to justify him: "I looked at him, and had not the slightest doubt he was sincere."[198]

The penultimate consideration is the one of responsibility. Campbell and Collinson add an interesting caveat to their conclusion that Jones, by doing nothing, was merely guilty of "gross and self-serving callousness": they assert that although he was morally reprehensible, he would not be guilty of murder "unless he was *in loco parentis*".[199] So did either the manager or Marlow have responsibility that could be considered equivalent to parental responsibility? The manager might be considered responsible for Kurtz's death if it could be shown that he had an employer's duty of care for him. A conclusion in this respect would involve knowledge of the manager's duties. It would appear he could not be superior to Kurtz, in the sense of being in charge, if he would like Kurtz's position. However, his job does seem to include relieving the up-river stations - including the one operated by Kurtz – and this has not been done for some time. While insufficient textual evidence exists to allow allocation of certain blame, it does not seem an unreasonable surmise. There is, perhaps, a marginal terminological shift here, in emphasis at least, towards the concept of responsibility. But it is important because it seems to suggest the possibility of partial effect. The Smith and Jones example is clear in that Jones is the only conscious person available and the life or death of the child depends entirely on his actions or inactions. Responsibility and causality are unambiguously synonymous here. However, in Kurtz's case the manager, Marlow

198 Ibid., p. 99.
199 Ibid., p. 139.

and Kurtz himself as well as others all have possible influence and therefore choices to make. They collectively may be said to cause Kurtz's death. But responsibility is a more individual term: reality may not be as important as perception. Whereas the manager has an actual duty of care, Marlow does not.[200] He may, however, feel he is responsible because he, individually, could have prevented Kurtz's death regardless of what others were doing or could have done. This is the effect produced by the text, for it portrays Marlow as being very definitely willing to take personal responsibility. He holds himself responsible for the helmsman's death, for example, and takes it upon himself to tip him overboard against the wishes of everybody else present. He also, certainly, takes it upon himself to deal with the interests of Kurtz and the Intended. He keeps "the bundle of papers given…by Kurtz"[201] and "refused to give up the smallest scrap".[202] Finally and crucially he is prepared to do something he "hate(s) [and] detest(s)"[203] when he chooses to lie to the Intended. Marlow, therefore, perceives he has a responsibility for Kurtz. Of course this responsibility might be seen as just a tautology since the killing of Kurtz is actually the killing of one aspect of himself; equivalent to the killing of the conflicting idea.

Finally, it can be added that not only does Kurtz, by doing nothing, allow himself to die, he actively colludes in the killing since he also has partial responsibility: he has asked for, in effect, euthanasia. So Marlow, if he did collude

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200 Jim, in *Lord Jim,* was clearly in a position of responsibility.
201 Ibid.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid., p. 79.

in the death, would not be committing murder but assisted suicide. This interpretation is specifically adopted by Francis Ford Coppolla's film *Apocalypse Now* (1979). In it, Marlow is renamed Captain Willard, and Kurtz is replaced by Colonel Kurtz. Willard knows before he starts that the mission must be a secret. In this interpretation he actually spells-out, rather than denies, that he cannot tell Kurtz's story without telling his own. He then actually kills Kurtz, rather than merely witnessing his death, and Kurtz virtually asks him to do it, rather than merely passively waiting for it to happen. Watts's murder plot then has been changed. The term murder has become ambiguous. The death, by whatever name, clearly involves collusion between the manager, Marlow and Kurtz. For this reason the murder plot has been renamed the collusive death plot.

Kurtz's death is, however, unlike the death of Almayer. It does not end the story. It is not, in this sense, actually the "culminating point" of his story. The narrative-consciousness called Conrad has more work to do. It has the journey back to civilisation and the end sequence, the bit that "locks in the…whole 30000 words of narrative",[204] before it can move on. An ESDeS reader can give coherence to the "Horror!" episode by recognising it as the point of recognition; the choice. The narrative-consciousness recognises that "life is…for a futile purpose"[205] but chooses that Kurtz (and what he represents) dies so that Marlow can live. What then needs to follow – to make this possible - is the process of narration.

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[204] Letter to William Blackwood, 31st May 1902, in Karl and Davies (eds), *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. 2, 1898-1902,* p. 417.

[205] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 137.

ESDeS Overt Plotting: The Self-Deceptive Process to the Point of Narration.

The narrative-consciousness theory does not see Marlow and Kurtz as characters but as aspects of the overall narrative: with Marlow coming to represent one idea and Kurtz the conflicting not-p – the embodiment of existential awareness of futility. The initial discussion of the parent-child-self-deceptive-process, in this chapter, was ended at the point of recognition: when Kurtz died with "The horror!" on his lips, taking existential futility with him and leaving Marlow with the problem, what to do next? In essence, the covert plot ends at the same time. Elaine Showalter seems to pick up on this ending when she sums up Marlow's alternatives at this point. She asserts that "the text holds out hints that Marlow will replace Kurtz, take over his life – either by becoming mad and assuming Kurtz's role as God in the Congo, or by marrying his Intended back in the Old World".[206] In ESDeS terminology, this represents a choice between Story-3 and Story-2 but it presents a false choice because Marlow cannot "replace" Kurtz. Marlow represents the other side of the existential paradox and it is this other side of the separation that remains. However, the presentation draws attention to the fact that the text wants the reader to know that this is not a self-evident choice; it could have been the other way. Marlow could have been hidden and left existential awareness intact. In some sense this happens because Marlow is not happy with his role as a project maker. It is one thing for the narrative-consciousness to decide to ignore that existential angst that has been discovered, but it is not so easy to actually do so.

[206] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, London: Virago, 1992, p. 97.

Marlow may state he left the cabin and hence left Kurtz (not-p) behind but he does not find it so easy to do. He may state "The voice was gone", but to accept it is another matter. The best he can say about it is it is a "choice of nightmares".[207] He tells his audience "they very nearly buried me". Instead, he "remained to dream the nightmare out to the end". He restates the solution: "he had made the last stride, he had stepped over the edge, while I had been permitted to draw back my hesitating foot."[208] He restates also the observation that it was difficult: "No, they did not bury me, though there was a period of time which I remember mistily, with a shuddering wonder, like a passage through some inconceivable world that had no hope in it and no desire."[209] The reader, therefore, if they identify Kurtz's recognition of "The Horror" as the defining moment of the novel, must surely be making a mis-reading. It is not the recognition of this that is crucial to the story: this may even represent the commonplace. The important thing is the fact that the trip combines, as Gekoski recognises, "up the river to pick up Kurtz, and *back again*".[210] The journey back represents, for an ESDeS parent and child mechanism, the process of narration. For a full Story-2 exposition becomes possible only after the completion of a covert plot. The hiding of existential awareness is the prerequisite of the generation of a new cover story. The text of *Heart of Darkness* is already making it clear that this is not the easy process that narratives such as *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* may have implied.

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207 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 127.
208 Ibid., p. 138.
209 Ibid., p. 139.
210 Gekoski, "*Heart of Darkness*", p.59. My emphasis.

The trip back shows the process of narration. Marlow successfully returns to Europe where it might be thought that he would return to normality. The question becomes, what form should normality take? There are two ways in which an answer to this question could be attempted. The first is within the fictional universe and concerns the love motive. Cedric Watts suggests that "there is a personal romantic aspect to Marlow's visit to the Intended".[211] There is some justification for this assumption. Marlow describes the Intended in Kurtz's portrait of her: "She struck me as beautiful."[212] On the basis of this he decides to visit her and gives as his reason, "Curiosity? Yes, and also some other feeling perhaps."[213] This makes perfect sense in Watts's analysis because Watts has not identified Marlow's participation in Kurtz's death. It also seems an interesting explanation even after the covert plot has been renamed collusive death plot. Within this telling of the covert plot, all three characters in the collusive triangle have been shown to have cooperated with Kurtz's death. If this version is preferred to the Watts's version, it needs to be asked, what are their motivations? The manager wants Kurtz dead, it may be assumed, because he "resents Kurtz's success"[214] or, more likely, because he wants to take over the lucrative ivory source, for Kurtz "sends in as much ivory as all the others put together".[215] The question now is why Marlow should wish to have Kurtz dead. Although Bernard Paris asserts that "despite all that has been said about Marlow, there has been little discussion of his

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211 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 159.
212 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 141
213 Ibid.
214 Watts, "*Heart of Darkness*: The Covert Murder Plot - Plot and the Darwinian Theme", p. 137.
215 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 68.

motivations",[216] the love interest claim, as already described, provides an excellent motive for either killing Kurtz, or colluding with his murder or allowing him to die. Watts's suggestion, therefore, that this plot continues through Marlow's "transtextual biography"[217] into *Chance* is equally valid. This novel, to be discussed in depth in the next chapter, concludes with an expectation that Powell will marry Flora Anthony. Watts argues that: "A balance has been redressed: a pattern begun so long ago in *Heart of Darkness* has at last been vicariously completed."[218] This thesis thinks that the love story solution to either version of the murder plot is a brilliant proposal but not completely adequate. It leaves some unexplained factors which are better explained within the rules of narrative-consciousness theory.

The first objection might be that Marlow does not actually seem to be in the love-making mood when he returns to Europe. He stands apart from the crowds, as Roquentin is later to stand apart from the citizens of Bouville. He describes them scathingly: "I found myself back in the sepulchral city resenting the sight of the people hurrying through the streets to filch a little money from each other, to devour their infamous cookery, to gulp their unwholesome beer, to dream their insignificant and silly dreams."[219] No, it is clear that Marlow does not recover, in the usual meaning of the term, normality. He recovers by adopting existential-self-deception.

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216 Paris, *Conrad's Charlie Marlow*, p. viii.
217 Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p. 140.
218 Ibid.
219 Ibid., p. 139.

This conclusion can be reworded: Kurtz undeniably knows whatever it is he knows and therefore, as the other part of the overall narrative-consciousness, so does Marlow. The question of real interest is what it (or he) does with this knowledge. Showalter says the first thing to be done is "it must be kept from non-initiates."[220] Marlow appears to concur with this point of view for he does not immediately tell his story when he returns. First he is ill. Then, when faced with Company officials and distant cousins, "he refuses to give up information".[221] In fact, he does not tell his story until after he has had the interview with the Intended. The second objection to the simple love story emerges at this point. Susan Jones notes that there are centres of *Heart of Darkness* that are often overlooked. She draws attention to the female who "walked with measured steps",[222] and notes that "her physical vitality offer[ed] a striking contrast with the emaciated body of Kurtz".[223] Clearly her "vitality" would seem to imply that she is an alternative survivor beyond Kurtz, but the woman's significance is not to be fully appreciated until the interview between Marlow and the Intended is, once again, recognised as the central telling. During it "the Intended reminds Marlow of Kurtz's African mistress, whom he has seen in the jungle".[224] Showalter uses this comparison to reinforce the division of knowledge: "Europeans are kept in the dark about the brute realities of imperialism, human greed, and cruelty, black women are the

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220 Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p. 97.
221 Ibid.
222 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness,* p. 124. Quoted in Susan Jones, "Physical and Narrative Movement in *Heart of Darkness*", in Jakob Lothe, Jeremy Hawthorn, and James Phelan (eds), *Joseph Conrad: Voice, Sequence, History and Genre*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008, p. 100.
223 Jones, "Physical and Narrative Movement in *Heart of Darkness*", p. 101.
224 Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, p. 98.

dark."[225] The African woman stays behind with Kurtz and insofar as she represents the dark she also represents the knowledge that the Intended is not to be given. Marlow, in deciding to come back, has a more serious problem for he has seen the horror. The scene with the Intended is not about "keeping the truth from the Intended"[226] (although it also serves this purpose) it is about hiding the truth from himself. In fact, he has to pick up from the Intended several tricks of the trade. The meeting is much more bi-directional than is often assumed. In a sense it repeats the common confusion. Within all of the overt plot interpretations Marlow is variously seen as either a "chivalrous" white lie teller or a male exploiter. However, in the covert plotting scenario the roles are reversed. Marlow describes her as having "a mature capacity for fidelity, for belief"[227] because he realises that is what he is going to need to cultivate if he is going to be able to mimic her claim and to say "I have survived".[228] He, in the overt telling, allows her "that great and saving illusion" that he will need to acquire by completing his separation from Kurtz and moving on. He is projecting on to her what he is aspiring to himself. And just in case he is tempted to ignore the carrot he mulls over the stick: he wonders what would have happened "if I had rendered Kurtz that justice which was his due?"[229] He answers himself: "It seemed to me that the house would collapse before I could escape."[230] The consequences would be "unspeakable pain"[231] and

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225 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 98.
226 Ibid.
227 Ibid., p. 143.
228 Ibid.
229 Ibid., p. 147
230 Ibid.
231 Ibid.

"horror!" Luckily, luckily he doesn't tell that story (not-p) he tells another: he has chosen Marlow (p).

Ian Watt, Straus, Gekoski and this thesis have all shown that the "lie" within the codicil is the crucial, indicative, point. This shows up the third objection. The lie seems not to have worked in the sense that it did not lead to a successful conclusion of the love interest. The reason for the failure is generally ascribed to Marlow's selflessness. He feels it necessary to abandon his own marriage project in order to save the Intended's illusion relating to her image of Kurtz. This is acceptable as far as it goes, but an even more persuasive reason is available by recognising the extent of Marlow's sense of alienation. This can be discovered by returning to Gekoski's explanation of the "lie": "the 'Horror' and the name of Kurtz's Intended may be identical."[232]

It was argued above when the thesis stopped looking at Gekoski's solution to the "idea" that he seems to avoid going too far down the existential angst path. He stops at the Intended's individual solution. He manages this, it is suggested, by adopting two conflating techniques, which may be slips. These slips, if that is what they are, enter his article in its first few pages and are easily overlooked as the force of his full argument develops. If the slips *are* followed to their logical conclusions, a number of things separate out: the universal is differentiated from the individual in a unique way that reinforces the primacy of the covert function (universal) over the overt function (individual) in the ESDeS and, the serious-unserious split is

[232] Gekoski, "*Heart of Darkness*", p. 75.

covered in another way which ends by showing that a crucial aspect of their difference lies in the temporary nature of ESDeS. The first slip involves Gekoski's switching between the use of "I" ("I have argued") to the use of "we" ("we must begin by"). This is relatively trivial but indicative. The second slip is Gekoski's incorrect reference to Marlow's audience using lower-case letters.[233]

The "I" is connected to the individual and the "we" to the universal. The "I" is used first and dropped after the first two pages of the article but its inclusion at all presages Gekoski's return to the individual story after flirting with the universal. The use of "we" argues for inclusiveness, cooperation and collusion within the functional purpose of the text. It is as if Gekoski's text knows that, for the self-deceptive text to work for the narrative-consciousness represented by *Heart of Darkness*, "we" all have to cooperate. Marlow, as the only representative of this narrative-consciousness after Kurtz's departure, tells his audience:

> No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence, - that which makes its truth, its meaning - its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream – alone…[234]

Everybody (we) has to face existential angst (covert plot), but everyone (I) has to find their own way of doing so (overt plot). But for the overt plot to work it has to be acceptable to its audience. In fact, no plot works without other characters and insofar as others have to be in "your" plot "you" have to be in the others' plots.

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[233] Ibid., p.59. This is a curious one. *Youth* (1902) does refer to the characters with lower-case letters whereas *Heart of Darkness* uses upper-case letters. The mistake, if it is one, seems to lie with Conrad. Gekoski's actual use of the lower-case example happens in an ambiguous context in which both *Youth* and *Heart of Darkness* are mentioned. The argument here, however, stands whatever view is taken of the origin of the discrepancy.

[234] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 79.

Marlow may look as if he is on his own - as he is - but in order for his plotting to succeed it is necessary that he asks for the cooperation of others to listen to his story. He may say that it is impossible to tell but this is contradicted by his proceeding to tell at great length. What he means is not "I cannot find the words to tell" but "I should not tell". He says earlier, when he takes the job, "I undertook amongst other things not to disclose any trade secrets. Well I am not going to."[235] Well, this doesn't make sense either. Trade secrets have to be passed on. When he tells this to his listeners he knows the rest of the story and the readers do not. A second reading allows a different interpretation. It is true that he promises allegiance to the company, but mentioning it here implies he knows he has been let into a different conspiracy – concerning existential angst - which only works if it is not told. By telling the story the way he does he actually means that he is breaking this rule. If "we" are talking about "one's existence" "we" should not be. Marlow's listeners acknowledge this distinction since "there was not a word from anybody … [they] … might have been asleep".[236] By using the term "we" Gekoski seems to include himself and his readers within this cooperative grouping. Whatever Marlow sees as true for himself, "we" are going to go along with his analysis. He tells the audience, and the reader, what it is all about *and* asks them, like a child with a secret, not to pass it on. This is necessary because he needs the cooperation to tell how to both know it and "how not to pass it on". The audience accepts this restriction and the reader does (if they do) because it is in everybody's interests to do so. "We" would be colluding with the narrative-consciousness's

235 Ibid., p. 57.
236 Ibid., p. 80.

(called Marlow) existential-self-deception by ignoring the suppression of its covert plotting and by *not* allowing this thesis's interpretation of the final meeting with the Intended. This emerges from interpreting Gekoski's second slip.

The use of upper-case letters implies the references are to individuals. There is only one "Accountant" and he defines himself by the rules of accountancy. He is in a fixed role. The text of *Heart of Darkness* is full of the separating of those who adopt roles and those who adopt this thesis's existential-self-deception. The second group contains only Kurtz and Marlow both because they are individuals and because they make their own choices even though they know their choices are just convenient beliefs. Marlow points out that Kurtz "had faith - don't you see - he had faith. He could get himself to believe anything - anything."[237] Marlow also differentiates himself from the collective people of Brussels. They have "acquisitions, clothes, pretty rags - rags that would fly off at the first good shake" when what is needed is "a deliberate belief".[238] Johnson argues that this is "the most important speech in *Heart of Darkness"*[239] and this is true. Marlow here abandons his previous task of finding meaning to life outside of himself. He states quite explicitly that any meaning given to you is worthless and recognises that if meaning is to be found, for him, it has to be created by himself - and deliberately at that. In addition to the townsfolk of Brussels, the first group contains the vast majority of Conrad's characters. They do not make choices, they accept roles. A choice needs to be constantly reaffirmed whereas a role is, by definition, more

237 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 141.
238 Ibid., p. 91.
239 Johnson, *Conrad's Models of Mind*, p. 79.

permanent. There are two categories of role players. The first group contains the "good" characters or listeners to his tale: The Director of Companies, The Lawyer and the Accountant. These are referred to disparagingly: "Here you all are, each moored with two good addresses…normal from year's end to year's end."[240] The gloss of civilised structure and the concept of the right way to behave are contrasted with a realisation that the alternative gives nothing but one's own choices. There is also a reference of a similar sort in the opening frame. The Accountant brings out a box of dominoes. Not only are the named listeners tainted with lack of individuality, restricted to roles, but the undifferentiated role of consumer is added to their non-identity. In this sense normal-self-deception is grafted onto the idea of bad faith. The two go together. The framed story tells of the horrors associated with ivory-hunting, horrors of which the listeners prefer to know nothing. They give the message - loud and clear - that they will collude with the self-deceptive not knowing aspects of the story. Their well-being is held in common and, being in common, ensures their mutual collusion. Marlow's story is presented to such a trained group of listeners. They are able to read the covert message and will abide with the injunction not to notice. The reader, by joining them, is also being asked to read the purpose of the story, accept that it is in their interest to accept the conclusion, and to go along with it. The second group of named-only characters are found within the story that Marlow tells to these listeners. They include the manager, the brickmaker and the pilgrims. The story gives a little more of their existence. Unlike the listeners, who are presumably successful at what they do, none of this second group do their job properly. The brickmaker "did not make

[240] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 107.

bricks"[241] and the pilgrims are not holy. The manager too fails to fulfil his role that includes the duty to restock the Inner Station. Whatever their perceived function or degree of success within the novel, none of these characters can be said to possess individuality in the same way as Marlow and Kurtz. Gekoski identifies the Intended with this group. The Intended sacrifices her individuality to become a person who will live her life according to the rules of women with dead partners. She will not make her own choices. She is in bad faith.

However, since Gekoski uses lower-case letters to refer to the listeners, he is not attributing bad faith to them. They may be accountants (and so on), but are (presumably in Gekoski's eyes) not defined by their professions; this is not all there is to them. They are taken out of the equation. They are just one of many accountants: they are universal listeners with (merely) convenient names. When Marlow asks for cooperation from listeners with lower-case letters he is making a universal plea. If Gekoski is making a mistake then it would appear that, subconsciously, he must recognise the significance of the change. He is doing what Felman argues critics often do. They identify with the text: "The critical interpretation…reproduces [the text] dramatically, unwittingly *participates in it*."[242] Gekoski is inadvertently cooperating with Marlow's plea to keep the secret hidden. He should have recognised that Marlow is not making a one-to-one personal plea but a plea that applies to everybody insofar as they make trips "up the river".

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241 Ibid., p. 80.

242 Shoshana Felman, "Literature and Psychoanalysis", in Shoshana Felman (ed.), *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading Otherwise*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987, p. 101.

However, having apparently recognised this he "steps back", like Marlow. He "forgets" that he is considering universal existential anguish and focuses instead on the personal. His analysis does not give the Intended's behaviour universal significance in the same way. She retains her upper-case letter. Gekoski reduces her actions to the normal and her "saving illusion" to a normal-self-deception. This is acceptable for an individual. In an ESDeS sense this is necessary for, if she did refer to the universal and everybody adopted this attitude, the behaviour would become pathological. The behaviour of a collective "her" would restrict reproductive success rather than enhance it. The adoption of a role rather than an ESDeS can be seen, in this sense, to be one way of avoiding evolutionarily maladaption.

With Kurtz out of the way, the text unambiguously focuses on Marlow and his return journey. He too has an upper-case letter of course but here, because the naming is individual, he is seen as an individual. It is as an individual, therefore, that he recognises the futility of life. It is as an individual narrative-consciousness that he rejects this aspect of Kurtz. He knows, after the loss of Kurtz, he needs "a deliberate belief"[243] to survive and shows himself trying to find one with the Intended.

This analysis has made it clear, what has been hinted at all through this chapter, that there are two ways in which a narrative-consciousness could adopt a deliberate belief. One has been called ESDeS and the emerging other is called bad

[243] Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 91.

faith. The thesis has now progressed enough to be able to make the difference clear. In an existentialist's view people are all "hopelessly contingent beings thrown … into a world which could have logically existed without us, being itself radically contingent at every point".[244] To want it to be otherwise is to be in what Sartre calls "futile passion"[245] and this motivates its denial. Sartre calls this denial, bad faith. If bad faith is possible, argues Sartre, "it is because [contingency] is an immediate permanent threat to every project of the human being".[246] So "the first act of Bad Faith…is to flee what it cannot flee, to flee what it is."[247] Sartre regards the adoption of bad faith as both a universal risk and as a negative moral process: "The very project of flight reveals to Bad Faith an inner disintegration in the heart of being, and it is in this disintegration that Bad Faith wishes to be."[248] Sartre, therefore, "contrasts Bad Faith…with Authenticity".[249]

This terminology can be translated into the terminology used by this thesis. Authenticity maps accurately onto Story-3 and ESDeS maps accurately onto Story-2. Bad faith maps partially onto Story-1 and partially onto normal-self-deception. It differs from existential-self-deception, as defined by this thesis, along three dimensions: degree of necessity, form and duration.

Normal-self-deception originated in animals as a means for deceiving their prey and their partners. At this point in evolution it would have been a temporary

244 Arthur C. Danto, *Sartre*, Glasgow: Fontana, 1979, p. 24.
245 Ibid., p. 24.
246 Mary Warnock, *Existentialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 101.
247 Ibid., p. 100.
248 Ibid., p. 100.
249 Ibid., p. 105.

phenomenon: put on and taken off as and when necessary. In anthropomorphic terms there is the real sense of alternatives within normal-self-deception. There are multiple reasons for it and multiple ways of doing it but it is not actually necessary to live a "saving lie" or use "pipedreams" or adopt "childish prattle". If, however, a particular form of deception becomes the norm it becomes, in anthropomorphic terms, a permanent role. There may have been many causes and many possible alternative solutions but once a role is selected these options reduce to just one.

ESD is an adaptation of animal self-deception. In this form the possible causes of deception are, by definition, reduced to only the denial of existential contingency. There is now no choice whether or not to indulge in the deception. It now becomes necessary**.** However, the way the self-deception is carried out still carries the two options associated with its evolutionary forebear. It can be optional and multiple or it can be fixed. The former is ESD and leads to ESDeS, whereas the latter is bad faith and tends to lead to the form of storytelling called Story-1. Strictly speaking the two are not identical. Story-1, as related so far, entails the adoption of a pre-existing story – through the parent-child mechanism – and keeping to it. The story has historically tended to be a "god" story and there is a certain irony in putting people of bad faith into this category. There is a difference, however. Bad faith people do recognise the horror for themselves but find it so terrible that an "inner disintegration" occurs and they "flee" from it. The irony lies in the fact that the authentic person, like Kurtz, tries to be god whereas the bad faith person, like the Intended, adopts a god-form of story telling.

The reality, in contemporary times, is that neither of these two extremes is normally acceptable. Sartre may have thought that an individual, to achieve freedom, must reject bad faith and so, in this thesis's terms, opt for Story-3, but this thesis's hypothesis is that this does not happen very often, if at all. It thinks the ESDeS is now the dominant mode of narrative-consciousness and this entails a necessary, individual story which acts out the choice on a temporary basis.

Danto explains Sartre's position thus:

> [human beings] are not determined to be what they are through a fixed human nature in which they participate; it is their nature not to have a nature in this sense, and their lives are spent in quest of a self-definition which they cannot find in the terms in which they seek it. If they do find a definition, it will be a matter not of discovery but of decision: whatever we are is what we have decided to be, and we cannot therefore really *be* it since the option is always available to decide otherwise.[250]

The difference between the two modes of accommodating existential futility is spelt-out by the text in *Heart of Darkness*. The Intended has to lie and Marlow doesn't. The Intended's lie becomes her "own".[251] The "truth [that is] unendurable"[252] is a personal truth. And what might be unendurable is transformed, by the lie, into something ordinary. She is kept from awareness. She has put in place an image of Kurtz and has adopted her role *permanently*: "I am unhappy for – life."[253] She adopts the parent-child strategy; she avoids future questions for she

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250 Danto, *Sartre*, p. 36.
251 Gekoski, "*Heart of Darkness*", p. 74.
252 Ibid., p. 75.
253 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 145.

adopts the stance that she "knew. She was sure."[254] She will be like the residents of Brussels: she has no desire or need to change. Marlow, in contrast, is different for he retains the desire and power to change and does and, when he does, he will recognise that each new cover story will need to be repeated, retold and revitalised. Whatever story he adopts will, necessarily, be temporary: *Heart of Darkness* resonates with the necessity of a choice which is constantly exercised. In short, Marlow is tempted to court the Intended as a cover story or project but in the end rejects it for he recognises that this would entail accepting her way of being in the world and this would be serious: "The principle of freedom cannot require that he should be free not to be free."[255] Marlow, therefore, insofar as he is unserious, will come again to another point of recognition and "the lie" which may have been intended as a point of narration becomes in fact and immediately a new point of recognition. Marlow goes off from his interview still looking for relief from his awareness of existential futility. The telling of the story *Heart of Darkness* on the *Nellie* implies repetition but cannot itself be a repeat. The text, representing *a* narrative-consciousness, therefore, ends unfinished. This end is then brilliantly revisited with a new beginning when Marlow re-emerges in a new narrative-consciousness, *Chance.*

254 Ibid., p. 147.
255 J. S. Mill, *On Liberty*, Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1996, p. 102.

Chapter 5

Chance: An End to the Unfinished Story of *Heart of Darkness*.

Chance is the fourth book in which Marlow appears. At the manifest level, the text tells the story of Flora. She is the daughter of the disgraced financier Mr de Barral who has been jailed for fraud at the start of the story. The destitute young woman stays for a time with a Mr and Mrs Fyne before eloping with Captain Anthony, despite thinking that he could not possibly love her. When Flora's father is released from prison he joins the couple on board the *Ferndale*. For a time the three live unhappily together observed by Anthony's second mate, Powell, until Mr de Barral takes poison and dies. Following this the couple, according to Paul Wake, "live happily together until the time of Captain Anthony's death in a shipping accident six years later".[1] Clearly any account of the manifest plot ignores some detail. In this case Wake ignores the final bit of the story: Flora retires to a secluded cottage near the Thames until, partly due to Marlow's intervention, the reader is led to believe she and Powell marry. Although the focus of this account appears to be on Flora, the story actually starts with a first chapter that concerns Powell. He tells of the difficulties he experienced translating his second mate certificate into a berth. He was eventually successful only due to a remarkable set of coincident events; a namesake in the position of power; a previous second mate with a broken leg and a desperate captain of the *Ferndale* that absolutely had to leave - to pick up its cargo of dynamite - on the next tide.

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[1] Paul Wake, *Conrad's Marlow: Narrative and Death in "Youth", "Heart of Darkness",* Lord Jim *and* Chance, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 103.

Watts notes the Marlow transtextual aspect in *The Deceptive Text* and identifies, in addition to the overt telling, a particular style of covert plotting which "is covert in proportion to the reader's unawareness of the relevant material".[2] The Marlow connecting theme has been revisited recently by Bernard Paris and by Paul Wake. Paris has written a book on Marlow "as a mimetic portrait"[3] which he says reverses "the usual approach to Marlow [which is] to see him in functional terms, as a 'literary device'".[4] Paris goes on to claim that the purpose of the usual approach is "to look *through* Marlow to Conrad".[5] This thesis, of course, wants to reverse his reversal at least in the sense that it identifies Conrad with the narrative-consciousness. The reverse back is justified for two reasons. First, the mimetic approach cannot, it seems, include *Chance* and second, the adoption of the mimetic approach sees the end of *Heart of Darkness* as satisfactory. Paris ignores "the Marlow of *Chance*…[because he seems a]…much less fully realised figure"[6] in *Chance* than in the other three Marlow novels. He is satisfied with the end of *Heart of Darkness* because he interprets Marlow's reason for telling his auditors, on the *Nellie,* his story as "a cathartic experience in which he sets the record straight, purges himself of his anger and guilt, and regains his sense of rectitude".[7] In short, there is no need for further retelling. If this was to be accepted then it would follow that the experience is expected to be a one-off experience, for its success would

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2 Cedric Watts, *The Deceptive Text: An Introduction to Covert Plots*, Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984, p. 133.

3 Bernard J. Paris, *Conrad's Charlie Marlow: A New Approach to "Heart of Darkness" and Lord Jim*, New York: Palgrave, 2005, p. viii.

4 Ibid., p. 2.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 5.

7 Ibid., p. 71.

have the effect: to "put Kurtz behind him at last".[8] Yet Conrad feels compelled to give Marlow a further episode. This can be explained by ESDeS which demands a constant renewal of a cover story. The characters, in this view, are only "concepts in anthropoid shape or fragments of human psyche parading as whole human beings".[9] Kurtz is not seen as a person but as the part of a narrative-consciousness that represents awareness of existential futility and which has been hidden. This model would seem to be a better fit. In this model, *Chance* need not be ignored. Indeed it *has* to occur to finally bring to an end the unfinished story of *Heart of Darkness*.

An ESDeS reading of the text will be quickly justified because genre-marking is provided very early on and there is a very significant structural similarity between *Heart of Darkness* and *Chance*.[10] These two aspects merge to make the first section of the book a summary of the ESDeS reading of *Heart of Darkness* and the final section the bit that "locks in" the meaning of the transtextual narrative, as the original narrative-consciousness sees it.

The text introduces the genre-marking of unease on three separate occasions before the story even starts. The first occasion lies in the immediacy and ambiguity of the title. Just as *Heart of Darkness* could be read in three different ways, instilling immediate uncertainty, depending on the priority given to the component

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[8] Ibid., p. 71.

[9] Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 88. Quoted in Paris, *Conrad's Charlie Marlow,* p. 4.

[10] This is to be expected of course since both mimic the techniques used by the originating narrative-consciousness.

words, "chance" has three alternate meanings depending on whether it is contrasted with intention, cause and effect or probability. The second expression of the unease -marking is suggested by the epigraph printed prior to the beginning of the story. It is derived from a poem by Sir Thomas Browne. The part of the poem selected suggests that there is no cause and effect but this seems to be contradicted by the actual poem which seems to suggest not only a cause, but a divine cause. This will be fully developed later in the chapter. The third contribution to uneasiness actually appears in the text. The story opens with this sentence: "I believe he had seen us out of the window."[11] The "I" refers to the anonymous narrator, the "he" to Powell and the "us" to the anonymous narrator and Marlow. Now "believe" has a number of weak meanings such as "suppose", but substitution of such a synonym would not be a sufficient explanation of the presence of the sentence in such a crucial place. The subsequent telling of the story makes no use of the observation (the belief is neither confirmed nor discounted nor does it have any consequences) so is superfluous[12] since what follows does not depend upon it. Bernard Paris has trouble with the word. He finds Marlow's need for a "deliberate belief" in *Heart of Darkness* to be "puzzling"[13] and would, no doubt, find this puzzling too. It cannot, however, be overlooked. The narrative-consciousness called Conrad would not waste an initial sentence. Its use is to draw the reader's attention to the distinction between belief and knowledge; the possible and essential; necessity and contingency. Conrad, through the narrator, makes no attempt to give the reader any evidence for the stated

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[11] Ibid., p. 7.

[12] This is true as it happens but it could have been otherwise. This is used by Sartre as a technical term. He means existence is something that is not necessary; something extra. See Arthur C. Danto, *Sartre*, Glasgow: Fontana, 1979, p. 23.

[13] Paris, *Conrad's Charlie Marlow*, p. 68.

belief so it remains an unsubstantiated belief and therefore sets the story, at it outset, into an ontological framework. The implication is that there is no reason, despite the claim in the extended epigraph, to be given; no cause and effect; no necessity. Therefore, the reader is directed to think the opposite: that all is contingent. The text ultimately seems to support this interpretation. It suggests that people find it possible to believe things in general and to have no obvious reasons (in the sense of rational explanations) for doing so. It provides a long example with de Barral's rise to prominence which depended on "everyone" believing in the efficacy of "Thrift".[14] Later the text tells us that such a behavioural belief mechanism not only happens but is *necessary*. It has Flora say, with reference to Captain Anthony, "I believe in him" and then to justify her unsubstantiated belief with, "I *must* believe in him."[15] *Chance*, therefore, reinforces *Heart of Darkness's* and Marlow's need for a "definite belief": one that is not supported by an external metanarrative; one that is individually crafted. The story that follows the first sentence is therefore delivered by the surviving part of the narrative-consciousness. It is Marlow's expression of creation: "I am trying to account for myself."[16] It completes what Paris thinks he wants to do; that is put "Kurtz behind him at last". It completes what the ESDeS wants to do which is to temporarily re-hide existential angst

The structural similarity between the two stories - *Heart of Darkness* and *Chance* - concerns the apparently unnecessary in each. *Chance,* like *Heart of*

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[14] Joseph Conrad, *Chance: A Tale in Two Parts,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 58.
[15] Ibid., p. 270. My emphasis.
[16] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* in *Youth/Heart of Darkness/The End of the Tether*, London: Penguin, 1995, p. 109.

Darkness, has superfluous sections. It has a disconnected first chapter as Conrad admits himself: "it was written in 1907 and the rest of the novel in 1911-12. And it did not belong to that novel."[17] It also has a conveniently hurried final chapter.[18] The first bit turns out to be, in effect, a restatement of the position of the narrative-consciousness as it was left at the end of *Heart of Darkness* and the "hurried section" finishes *Heart of Darkness* by showing the actualisation of its implied repetition.

Conrad wrote to Edward Garnett, in 1898, that he was thinking of writing a book of "short tales in which he planned to include 'Jim' (20.000) 'Youth' (13.000) 'A Seaman' (5000) 'Dynamite' (5000) and another story of say 15.000."[19] Dynamite is *Chance* according to Jocelyn Baines: "Dynamite was probably the story that Conrad began to write some years later and then developed into *Chance.*"[20] In between it became *Explosives*, which is a crossed out title on the manuscript of *Chance.*[21] Conrad describes this work as about a dynamite ship "something like Youth"[22] and Powell, of course, gets his chance because the *Ferndale* is booked "next day" to take on board "forty tons of dynamite".[23] From

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17 Letter to J. B. Pinker, 1 June 1913, in Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (eds), *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. 5,1912-191,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 229

18 Martin Ray, "Introduction", in Conrad, *Chance,* p. xiv.

19 Letter to Edward Garnett, 28 May or 4 June, 1898, in Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (eds) *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. 2, 1898-1902,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 229.

20 Jocelyn Baines, *Joseph Conrad - A Critical Biography*, London: Penguin, 1960, p. 257.

21 Ibid., fn. 2, p. 586, referring to p 459.

22 Letters to J. B. Pinker, 12 April, 1905 in Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies (eds) *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad, Vol. 3, 1903-1907, 1988,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 229. See also Baines, *Joseph Conrad - A Critical Biography*, fn. 29, p.586 referring to p. 459.

23 Conrad, *Chance,* p. 17.

all this it follows that whatever the publication dates of the four Marlow novels, the character Marlow in all of them was conceived of at the same time – 1898. That is, when Conrad was originally thinking about *Chance* he was also thinking about the other Marlow stories. It seems, therefore, not unreasonable to make the claim that this first section has a great deal of affinity with the other Marlow stories: that the ideas in this first chapter are related to this earlier period. This is presumably what is meant when it is said that "it belongs to another story". But this does not, at the same time, make it out of place with the new story. In fact, it makes it just the opposite. The clear, and early, genre-marking suggesting ambiguity between Story-1 and Story-2 returns Marlow to exactly where he left *Heart of Darkness*. The first section is in place, therefore, to sum up, for the new reader, where Conrad had got to with his ESDeS at the earlier time.

This is part of a more complicated argument which seems to double everything present in *Heart of Darkness* and will be fully explored below. It will be presented under a series of subheadings, to help navigate through the discussion. These will mirror those used in chapter 4, but with changes. There is an extra first heading, "The ESDeS Process: In the Introductory Section of *Chance*" to describe the operation of the "unnecessary" first bit. The "Overt Plotting" section, as the interpretative distracting mechanism, has been reduced to a minimum since it is felt that this point has already been adequately made. The "Genre-Markers" heading becomes "Additional Genre-Markers" because unease has already been introduced and it precedes "ESDeS in the Overt Plot" to show that these can work both ways.

The genre-markers encourage an ESDeS reading and the parent-child-mechanism indicates the lingering attachment to certainty. As this certainty decreases it becomes less important and is reduced, in effect, to an additional genre-marker. Intentionality is excluded as a separate heading: it is included within the first half of the "ESDeS in the Overt Plot: Up to de Barral's Death" since it is now, also, taken as a given within Conradian texts. A section, "Bracketing Deaths", is included but this is a mere formality. Unlike the multiple death-like events in *Heart of Darkness*, the initiating and final events are clear in this work. The "Covert Plot" is next, to be followed by the final part of "ESDeS in the Overt Plotting: From de Barral's Death". "Repetition" should really be abstracted as a final and separate heading because it has become intrinsic to the whole narrative. Indeed, it might be said to be *the* motivating force of the ESDeS. It is for this reason, however, that it is not: it is left, as it was intended, permeating the whole narrative.

The ESDeS Process: In the Introductory Section of *Chance*

Wake points out that "uniquely, in *Chance* two narrators are introduced: Marlow and Charles Powell",[24] and Frederick Karl points out "it will be noticed that all of Conrad's narrators – Marlow…Powell…are each all men of striking similarity".[25] Marlow and Powell are both second-level narrators, they both have the same first name, and they both "had retired from the sea".[26] It is not unreasonable to think

[24] Wake, *Conrad's Marlow,* p. 103.
[25] Frederick R. Karl, *A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad*, New York: Farrer, Straus and Giroux, 1969, p. 54.
[26] See Conrad, *Chance,* p.29 for a Marlow reference and p. 329 for a Powell reference.

that they are merely different representations of the same narrative-consciousness. The first section, which continues a short bit beyond chapter 1 to where Marlow takes over the main responsibility of narration from the anonymous first narrator and the embedded Powell, takes this possibility on in two parts. This first part puts distance between Marlow and Powell by showing that Marlow is unserious compared to Powell who has yet to traverse the journey to the point of recognition. The second part, of the first section, corrects Powell's deficit by following his ontological journey.

Marlow's unseriousness is commented on very quickly and constantly reinforced throughout the novel. He interrupts Powell's tale with one of his own and tells it with his "usual nonchalance",[27] thus expressing his view of himself as a man "who believes himself free and exempt from any obligation to society".[28] He is perceived by Powell as the sort who does things "for the fun of the thing",[29] and he engages with the Fynes "in the unworthy hope of being amused".[30] That was his choice at the end of *Heart of Darkness*. The nature of the choice for him was such that it would make no difference if his next problem was of "utmost seriousness" or "excruciatingly funny".[31] However, for true ESD the choice must be constantly re-enacted. This is clearly a difficult idea to impart within one story. *Heart of Darkness* implies repetition but Marlow's reappearance within *Chance* actualises it.

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27 Ibid., p. 10.
28 Gérard Jean-Aubry, *The Sea Dreamer*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957, p. 239.
29 Conrad, *Chance,* p. 28.
30 Ibid., p. 40.
31 Ibid.

In this case the narrative-consciousness invents a Marlow surrogate: it uses Powell as the illustrative character.

The bulk of the first section which "does not belong" is therefore allocated to Powell's journey – which repeats Marlow's journey as he repeated Kurtz's journey. Powell describes how achieving his second mate certificate was "the finest day of [his] life" but how "disillusion" followed swiftly upon "the finest day"[32] because he couldn't get a berth. The text injects the motif word "uneasiness"[33] and the description of Powell as "so desperate"[34] between the "disillusion" and the next stage. Fortunately, at this point, he meets a friend who advises him to try "Mr Powell at the Shipping Office".[35] The text now produces, in quick succession, a contrast between the universal and the individual, the examination of the possibility of suicide, its rejection, and the possibility of not-p, and the entrance of p.

The universal is introduced by generalising Powell's narration so that it is seen to have applied before. This is done by interrupting the narration "while Powell lights his pipe"[36] and interposing a story told by his narrating double, Marlow. Neither the reader nor Marlow are actually aware of Powell's name at this point. Up to its revelation he is referred to variously as "he", as in the first sentence,

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32 Ibid., p. 9.
33 Ibid., p. 9.
34 Ibid., p. 17.
35 Ibid., p. 9-10. The man at the Shipping Office is really called Mr Powell and the coincidence between his name and Charlie Powell's name is an essential ingredient of the story that follows.
36 Ibid., p. 10.

and as "our new acquaintance".[37] Marlow tells his story about another Powell - the old Powell in the Shipping Office – and observes that "he [the old Powell] was not exactly remarkable" in response to a question from the narrator and replies, to a similar question from Powell, that he "remembered him very well".[38] Although the text is referring to the old Powell it could, because of the way it is said, equally well be referring to Marlow's old self since he answers "with a slight reminiscent smile".[39] Then too Marlow is compared to "Buddha"[40] and Powell to Socrates[41]: both wise men. So, the text, having possibly linked the old Powell with Marlow, reinforces the impression that there is nothing new in the universe by sandwiching this episode between two pre-existing autobiographical episodes. The whole Powell story before and after this episode is a reiteration of Conrad's own experience. After meeting the old Powell, for example, the young Powell joins the *Ferndale* which echoes Conrad's own first second mate berth, the *Riverdale*. The text immediately negates this universalising tendency by providing the denouement of the delayed decoding. The young Powell announces "my name happens to be Powell too".[42] The story is taken from the realm of anyone and is returned to the young Powell's individual story.

It is possible now to continue to read Powell's narrative within an ESDeS parent-child interpretation because the possibility of an ESDeS reading has been advertised (with the universal) and avoided (by returning to the individual) in

37 Ibid., p. 8.
38 Ibid., p. 10.
39 Ibid.
40 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness,* p. 147.
41 Conrad, *Chance,* p. 10.
42 Ibid.

exactly the same passage. The next step again mirrors *Heart of Darkness*. There, Marlow explicitly mentions that he nearly died, showing that he had considered suicide and rejected it. In *Chance*, Powell does not go so far but, in a very expressive passage, he is shown to be very actively considering it. The passage is too long to quote in its entirety but its implication is clear. It starts with Powell saying "he didn't think himself good enough for anybody's kinship"[43] and ends when the narrator sums up that "he conveyed very well to us the sense of his youthful hopelessness surprised at not finding its place in the sun and no recognition of its right to live".[44] In between there is sandwiched an overwhelming sense of despair. Nevertheless, Powell, like Marlow before him, finally points out: "I concluded I would give up the whole business. But I didn't give up in the end."[45] He senses he can create a story (p) to live by: he picked "up the thread of his story".[46] The text, however, cannot resist spelling-it-out that his story could have been otherwise: "It [the story] only has the sense that's put into it; and that's precious little sometimes."[47] It intrudes a story that tells how Powell wandered about in St Katherine's Dock House looking for the shipping office. It is a surreal episode, to match the "pointless" shelling of the jungle in *Heart of Darkness*. Near the story's end Powell is told by a "bald, fat creature" that "You've lost your way."[48] Powell accepts this summary of his meanderings and starts to leave. He is told: "Shut the door quietly after you."[49] He accepts the advice and carries it out to

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43 Ibid., p. 10.
44 Ibid., p. 11.
45 Ibid., p. 12.
46 Ibid., p. 11.
47 Ibid., p. 15.
48 Ibid., p. 13.
49 Ibid.

the letter: "And I did shut it quietly - you bet. Quick and quiet."[50] The embedded anecdote represents the feeling of existential despair that is open to anyone to recognise and the meanderings indicate that not-p has been tried. The door indicates the need for a choice and when Powell closes it he has chosen to create a new cover story.

The text has given the process and the point of recognition, twice, in just seven pages. It now repeats it yet again. James interprets this as "a plunge into threatened frustration",[51] but an ESDeS reading sees it as fairly making not-p available. The young Powell story re-draws attention to the point of recognition and the rejection of existential angst not-p, but this time it moves the process on: it allows for a possible process of narration. Powell reiterates his discovery of angst: "I never looked at mankind in that light before. When one's young human nature shocks one."[52] Then he "tried the first door I came to",[53] and behind it he successfully finds himself a new function in the form of "a tall, active man…[who] …rushed in".[54]

The final bit of the first section goes on to show that the story to be told (p) is agreed to by all the participants: "[I] signed my name."[55] The text now fully justifies the inclusion of this first section by making plain its real intent. It goes on

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50 Ibid.

51 Henry James, "The New Novel", in *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1948, p. 203.

52 Conrad, *Chance*, p. 16.

53 Ibid., p. 13.

54 Ibid., p. 16.

55 Ibid., p. 20.

to tell the reader that the essence of ESDeS is the need for constant retelling. Having "signed", the reader is told the contract will be valid "not to exceed two years".[56] Marlow's presence in the audience reinforces the repetition theme by reminding readers of the seafaring metaphor: there is always another trip and every presence is "provisional".[57] Then the text gives the reader a crucial sentence: "This chance meeting with a man who had sailed with Captain Anthony had revived it."[58] This "it" has an immediate textual meaning but it also carries a bigger burden. "It" refers to "the idea" and the idea, as has been shown in the last chapter, is synonymous with existential awareness and the realisation that its burial is necessary. This gives extra meaning to the title and a crucial phrase near the end of chapter 1. The title gives some sense that the novel is about the setting of opposites against one another: chance against necessity. Powell asserts "my appointment was the work of chance"[59] and this may have been true but the sentence also carries the implicit content that Powell could have, in theory, turned down the offer of the job. This makes the phrase that there are some things which "cannot be evaded"[60] crucial.

The ending of *Heart of Darkness* worked for a brief period of time but eventually it had to be rewritten as a new project. The new project is called Flora's story. It tells her manifest story from her childhood to the death of her father. It can

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56 Ibid.
57 Ibid., p. 29.
58 Ibid., p. 34.
59 Ibid., p. 25.
60 Ibid., p. 28.

be read as a separate story but can also provide material for many interpretations. It can also be read as an ESDeS and this thesis now continues with these tasks.

Overt Plotting

Frederick Karl thinks that *Chance* is "thematically one of Conrad's most straightforward novels".[61] In which case, since the title of the book is *Chance*, it might be thought that the theme is indeed chance. However, nobody seems to think this is, in fact, the case. Baines regards it as more like the opposite: he thinks it is more concerned with "emotional isolation".[62] Karl identifies the meaning as "married love".[63] Paul Wake notes both of these possibilities and many other themes in his attempt to find the centre of *Chance* in a very recent analysis,[64] but then comes to a very different and, he claims, consensual conclusion: "there is an emerging consensus that the 'centre' of the novel is…gender."[65] This may be so, but two points can be (re)made with respect to overt plotting and this thesis. The first is that this thesis does not think that the title is as misleading as all that. If it had to choose between Conrad and a critic it would choose Conrad. Chance is the choice. As shown in the previous section, chance when contrasted with its opposite suggests an ESDeS and an ESDeS revolves around the axis of choice. And the second point is that if an ESDeS is being considered then any final conclusion to the meaning of the plotting is undesirable. Whatever theme is adopted specifically, the

61 Karl, *A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad*, p. 242.
62 Baines, *Joseph Conrad - A Critical Biography*, p. 387.
63 Karl, *A Reader's Guide to Joseph Conrad*, p. 242.
64 Wake, *Conrad's Marlow*, p. 110-118.
65 Ibid., p. 110.

more general point is reiterated by this thesis: the actual manifest or latent plotting is useful only as long as it distracts from the covert plotting. Paul Wake might be said to collude with this purpose for he hardly mentions the "hurried ending" which, again, suggests a covert plotting, for he does not give enough significance to the Powell and Flora axis, first suggested by Cedric Watts. He does not notice that, in the same way that *Heart of Darkness* is not about Kurtz but about Kurtz *and* Marlow *and* the Intended, *Chance* is not about Flora: it is about Powell *and* Marlow *and* Flora as aspects of an overall striving to accommodate knowledge of existential futility. It is only after this prior has been achieved that overt plotting – in either manifest or spiritual forms – is of interest. They are undoubtedly of interest but they come after the interest of this thesis. Too much obsession with interpretations colludes with the function of covert plotting and causes the ESDeS genre-marking, including any self-deceptive process, to be overlooked which, in turn, will result in a successful hiding of the covert plot.

Additional Genre-Markers

It has already been argued that uneasiness creeps in from the very first with the deliberate choice of title, changed at the last minute to *Chance*. The motif word then re-occurs every so often. A few examples give the flavour. It appears first in the context of a friend of Powell, who is never again mentioned. He is said to be "in a state of outward joy and inward uneasiness".[66] It appears again with respect to Flora's erstwhile boyfriend, who is in the process of abandoning her. He is

[66] Ibid., p. 9.

observed to have an "uneasy appearance".[67] Powell is not exempt. "His uneasiness grew"[68] when he was faced with a possibly explosive collision.

Unease, of course, is not enough: it has to be associated with self-deception and existential-self-deception. Normal-self-deception is widespread as always. Marlow, Powell and Mr de Barral are all subject to the failing. Marlow's most visible manifestation has echoes of his behaviour in *Heart of Darkness* in which he claims not to see the significance of certain events until later. Here, too, a similar disjunction takes place. He observes Flora walking dangerously near the edge of a cliff but claims not to interpret her behaviour correctly until she goes missing: "You may be surprised," he tells his friend, "but I assure you I had not perceived this aspect of it till that very moment."[69] If he is to be taken at his word there would be no option but to see him as a self-deceiver because he has previously discussed the fact that an "accident" would have undoubtedly led a coroner's inquest to conclude a verdict of "suicide".[70]

It is not as easy to isolate Powell's self-deception. It permeates the text and, mimicking Marlow's infatuation with the Intended in *Heart of Darkness*, mostly concerns the idea of Flora. The evidence abounds: the language used when Powell first sees her indicates this without the need to explicitly spell-it-out: "the testimony of his eyes, made him open them very wide", "he gasped mentally", "she seemed so

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67 Ibid., p. 86.
68 Ibid., p. 235.
69 Ibid., p. 42.
70 Ibid., p. 37.

young and girlish".[71] In addition, Marlow specifically notes Powell's attitude: "All the sympathies of Mr Powell were for Flora Anthony" and "This speech established Powell as a champion of Mrs Anthony."[72] De Barral is also not unaware of Powell's infatuation. He says to him, "My daughter has taken quite a liking to you, Mr Powell."[73] Equally, his behaviour when he needed to light a flare to avoid a collision indicated a besotted young man. He turns from a capable seaman to a complete incompetent in her presence. She is the one who has to light the torch, the result of which can be read ambiguously: "the flare blazed up violently between them."[74] Powell may "fall in love" but he chooses to "bury" the knowledge. He, of course, continues to deny this knowledge (self-deceive) even after Captain Anthony is dead and even after Marlow points it out to him: "if I were you I would mention my enthusiasm to Mrs Anthony. Why not?" and he responds, "Pah! Foolishness."[75]

In between, de Barral gives an exemplary representation of self-deceptive behaviour equivalent to that of the Reverend Dimmesdale. He is presented, like Kurtz, as both "hollow at the core"[76] and "a very remarkable person". [77] In his case de Barral is remarkable because he becomes a very rich and successful financier but remains devoid of substance. The text explains: "He was a mere sign, a portent. There was nothing in him."[78] Conrad intends his story to be taken as a general or universal statement. De Barral succeeded in tapping into the general desire to

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71 Ibid., p. 216.
72 Ibid., p. 234.
73 Ibid., p. 303.
74 Ibid., p. 237.
75 Ibid., p. 326.
76 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness,* p. 121.
77 Ibid., p. 68.
78 Conrad, *Chance,* p. 58.

believe (marked by the first sentence). In the absence of a God-belief something else becomes necessary and in this case it is "Thrift". Marlow suggests anything else would have been just as effective, "it may be development, or it may be competition, or education, or purity, or efficiency or even sanctity".[79] Conrad says categorically that it is a necessary thing to believe in something. He then adds that de Barral "himself believed it".[80] In a few short sentences the text has laid bare the need for an ESDeS. De Barral's nothingness is linked to people's need to believe in general and his need to believe it himself specifically. The text continues with the pretence of giving de Barral a personality. He is made to illustrate three out of the four behavioural characteristics of self-deception and draws attention to, but rejects, the fourth. The two paradoxical ideas are presented freely: invest money and make "ten per cent"[81] out of ridiculous schemes. De Barral must have known about this paradox but appears not to; he appears to believe. Marlow is convinced that: "There was no game, no game of any sort, or shape or kind."[82] In addition de Barral appears impervious to the evidence. In a wonderfully surreal description of the court scene that rivals Powell's earlier "meanderings" it was demonstrated, "Under public examination", that:

> He had been the prey of all sorts of swindlers, adventurers, visionaries and even lunatics. Wrapping himself up in deep and imbecile secrecy he had gone for the most fantastic schemes; a harbour and docks on the coast of Patagonia, quarries in Labrador - such like speculations. Fisheries to feed a canning Factory on the banks of the Amazon was one of them. A principality to be bought in Madagascar was another. As the grotesques details of these incredible transactions came out one

79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
82 Ibid., p. 61.

> by one ripples of laughter ran over the closely packed court - each one a little louder than the other. The audience ended by fairly roaring under the cumulative effect of absurdity. The Registrar laughed, the barristers laughed, the reporters laughed, the serried ranks of miserable depositors watching anxiously every word, laughed like one man. They laughed hysterically - the poor wretches - on the verge of tears.
> There was only one person who remained unmoved. It was de Barral himself.[83]

There comes a time, though, when even he is forced, by the process of recognition and lack of societal collusion, to the point of recognition: Placed in the dock, "he lost his steadiness as if some sustaining illusion had gone to pieces within him suddenly".[84] But, like Dimmesdale, the point of recognition is quickly followed by a new narrative process. Dimmesdale, it will be recalled, constantly faces evidence that contradicts his piety and has to reinvent his position by putting in place further self-deceptions. De Barral behaves in the same way. His first new story becomes, "Time! Time! Time would have set everything right",[85] and he returned to his "quiet bearing which had been his usual".[86] Only post-hoc recognition fails. De Barral remains happy with the new set of facts. His daughter, Flora, picks him up from jail, renames him Smith and inserts him into a safe environment. Within this safe environment, he is protected from further challenge. Nevertheless he elaborates when necessary. To justify himself to his daughter and sustain her support he explains: "What has done for me was envy. Envy."[87] He also boosts his self-image by persuading himself that he could start again: "The start

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83 Ibid., pp. 63-64.
84 Ibid., p. 64.
85 Ibid., p. 65.
86 Ibid., p. 64.
87 Ibid., p. 264.

is only a matter of judicious advertising."[88] And, in this safe environment, he is, once again, "impervious to words, to facts, to inferences. It would have been impossible to make him see his guilt or his folly - either by evidence or argument - if anybody had tried to argue."[89]

The uneasiness marker is also linked to existential-self-deception. De Barral's court scene comes close to transcending the normal and becoming absurd and Marlow links it with "nothing" and "death" and "collusion" and "silence" when talking of a conversation with Flora:

> In fact we had nothing to say to each other; but we two, strangers as we really were to each other, had dealt with the most intimate and final of subjects, the subject of death. It had created a sort of bond between us. It made our silence weighty and uneasy.[90]

This would be enough but more is provided to ensure there can be no mistake that the uneasiness is caused by the awareness of existential angst. It is possible to locate dozens of references to the term and its synonyms: absurdity,[91] nothing,[92] pointless[93] and futile.[94] And if this is not enough the two meanings of absurd contrasted in the "throwing the shoe" episode in *Heart of Darkness* is replicated in *Chance*. The following passage gives an absolutely clear view of existential angst -

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88 Ibid., p. 273.
89 Ibid., p. 280.
90 Ibid., p. 157.
91 See ibid. (at least), pp. 38, 41, 43, 46, 55, 64, 83, 128, 128 (sic), 174, 182, 207, 223, 275, 299 and 203.
92 See ibid. (at least), pp. 39, 46, 46 (sic), 55, 58, 161 and 297.
93 See ibid. (at least), p. 264.
94 See ibid. (at least), p. 272.

"loneliness", "hopeless", "obscure", "soulless", and "transient" - cast alongside "Fyne fussing in a knicker-bocker suit":

> It was one of those dewy nights, clear, starry nights, oppressing our spirit, crushing our pride, by the brilliant evidence of the awful loneliness, of the hopeless obscure insignificance of our globe lost in the splendid revelation of a glittering, soulless universe.…Fyne fussing in a knicker-bocker suit before the hosts of heaven, on a shadowy earth, about a transient, phantom-like girl, seemed too ridiculous to associate with. On the other hand there seemed something fascinating in the very absurdity.[95]

The text also repeats another technique used in *Heart of Darkness*. It draws attention to the Story continuum. Powell is paraded as a Story-1 character: he is "simple, and his faculty of wonder not very great. He's one of those people who form no theories about facts."[96] Along side this naivety is placed Marlow, the Fynes and people in general: but these are differentiated. Although Marlow recognises that he was once, like Powell, innocent of anguish, he has now passed the point of recognition; he has experienced the "Horror" and needs to accommodate it. He needs to move on to Story-2. He is tempted to accept normality and retreat back like the Fynes and people in general but, ultimately, he cannot. The Fynes are absolutely certain that their moral values are absolute in the same way as the Intended "knew".[97] People in general are the same: "The composure of the people on the pavements was provoking to a degree, and as to the people in the shops, they were benumbed, more than half frozen – imbecile."[98] This is no chance observation. He repeats it: "Luckily, people, whether mature or not

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95 Ibid., p. 41.
96 Ibid., p. 196.
97 Ibid., p. 147.
98 Ibid., p. 23.

mature are for the most part quite incapable of understanding what is happening to them: a merciful provision of nature to preserve an average amount of sanity for working purpose of this world."[99] The Fynes and people in general are protected against further recognition of existential futility. Marlow, in contrast, accepts the fact of anguish and lives his life through a series of provisional projects in an unserious way. The narrator observes of him: "Marlow had the habit of pursuing general ideas in peculiar manner, between jest and earnest."[100] Marlow observes of himself that "surely life must be amused somehow".[101]

Of course Marlow is fortunate. He has been through the agonising; the coming to terms with futility. He has acquired the ability to deal with it. An anecdote linking Powell with Captain Anthony shows what happens when this isn't the case and, in so doing, indicates – gives a genre-marking for - the necessity for hiding. The example concerns the manner in which Powell initially obtained his second mate berth. He suspects that he obtained his post because the captain had been given the impression that he was a relative to the old Powell. When he finds an opportunity to confess to this accidental deception, Captain Anthony responds with "Ah! That's the story."[102] Then he adds: "It doesn't matter how you came on board."[103] The story continues with the captain immediately forgetting the existence of Powell and starting, again, "his headlong tramp",[104] his pacing up and down. This causes Powell to remark that it was as if the captain was "doing

99 Ibid., p. 91
100 Ibid., p. 21.
101 Ibid., p. 91.
102 Ibid., p. 233.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.

something purposeful like the avoidance of pain or temptation".[105] Powell describes his feeling, while watching the captain: "It was very marked once one had become aware of it. Before, one felt only a pronounced strangeness."[106] Powell immediately seems to regret his revelations. He immediately withdraws from them and retreats back to normality: the captain, he says, "desired him suddenly…to have all the staysails eased off".[107] Now Haight has pointed out that self-deception is signposted by something that doesn't make sense and Watts has indicated that a covert plot is indicated by anomalies. This exchange with its strangeness resonates with these. The captain has not even noticed Powell. He has been rather ostentatiously totally absorbed in his own worries. He was not anxious, let alone feeling guilty, about an improper act or its suppression. His comment is totally inappropriate. It is as if he is commenting on something else. His next statement makes more sense in the context. He is not interested in Powell so he is not interested in why he came on board. The switch from not making sense to being absolutely correct in the circumstances of the exchange between the two carries some ambiguity for a first time observant reader but not for an ESDeS reader. They have already decoded the early pages of *Chance* as covertly conveying a recapping of the structural aspects of an ESDeN. Their interpretation is likely to be a fairly obvious amalgamation of the two statements. The two together are read as, it doesn't matter what your story is - any overt story will do. It is the inevitable way things are. It is alright as long as it disguises, for a time, anguish, such as the text allocates to the captain. Let's get on with the work.

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105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., p. 233.

ESDeS in the Overt Plot: Up to de Barral's Death

The narrative-consciousness, according to an ESDeS reading, arrives in the new book as it left the last. The old story originated from the narrative-consciousness that is called Conrad for short. The new story, because it originates from the same narrative-consciousness, uses the same techniques which created itself and *Heart of Darkness*. In *Heart of Darkness* it creates two characters, Marlow and Kurtz, to represent p and not-p respectively. Marlow is the sole survivor of this telling and takes on the mantle of the overall, unsplit, narrative-consciousness. The narrative-consciousness, in its new manifestation, *Chance*, might now be called Marlow. Marlow, therefore, creates in turn two new characters.[108] Powell serves the purpose for Marlow that Marlow served for the original narrative-consciousness, called Conrad. In the same way that Marlow is the fictional version of Conrad, Powell is the fictional version of the fictional Marlow. Powell's experiences, as related in this first chapter, are very similar, of course, to Conrad's autobiographical account related in *A Personal Record* (published 1912) relating to his experiences of 1880. "The tendency…to look through Marlow to Conrad"[109] is repeated: only in this case Powell can be looked through to find Marlow. Powell and Marlow are two halves of genuine "literary device".[110] Each half speaks separately when it is convenient to create distance but they come together, in the last "hurried section", in order to

[108] See *Thinks* that follows in the next chapter. Helen is a fictional character who creates characters that mimic her own situation.
[109] Paris, *Conrad's Charlie Marlow*, p. 2.
[110] Ibid., p. 2.

repeat, more effectively, the separation at the end of *Heart of Darkness*. The purpose of this division is to separate Marlow's professed unseriousness from the constant pressure to be serious. To have a project demands seriousness so he creates Powell to do this work yet at the same time retain his integrity. Marlow, in addition to Powell, creates a parallel figure, to serve as Kurtz, in the character of Mr de Barral. Flora is the repetition of the minor character, the Intended but, unlike the Intended, she has a major role in Marlow's *Chance*. She is used to explore the possibilities of project. She forms various dyads: paired with her father she represents angst and paired with Anthony or Powell she represents continuing projects. Before this exploration can take place, within the parent-child mechanism or process of self-deception, there are the necessary first steps which are to recognise futility, to reject suicide and to make a choice to have a project.

The meaning of chance can be taken to be either not a result of any obvious cause or intention or as a synonym for probability. However, the text, at first reading, seems unsure which definition to use. Sometimes simple chance seems to be an acceptable explanation of some event in the absence of more information. Marlow describes, in this simple explanatory way, two such events: his "accidental acquaintance with the Fynes"; and "this chance meeting with a man who had sailed with Captain Anthony."[111] If asked to explain what chance means, when used like this, Marlow would answer: "By accident I mean that which happens blindly and without intelligent design."[112] This meaning sometimes suffers expansion, to take

[111] Conrad, *Chance,* p. 34.
[112] Ibid., p. 31.

on the explanatory form of a controlling power such as fate or destiny. The text slips into this way of thinking quite often. It explains Flora's governess in this way: "the woman whom chance had put in command."[113] Similarly, it was "chance [that] had thrown the girl [Flora] in his [Captain Anthony's] way".[114] If asked to explain what chance means, when used like this, the text would say "a mysterious force".[115] Browne's introductory epigraph may bias the reader in either direction. It, at first, only seems to assert that: "Those that hold that all things are governed by fortune had not erred." However, since an "epigraph is part of the narrative in the sense of providing an oblique comment on it",[116] it would seem fair to explore it further and, if this is done, it will be found that the poem from which the epigraph is drawn goes on to add that "such believers in fortune would not have erred if they had recognised that behind *Chance* lies a divine pattern".[117] In this extended reading, Browne would appear to be suggesting the exact opposite to the title. Slippage from "chance" to "fate" or "fortune" does not change its essence but further slippage into "divine" reverses the meaning. Chance is said to mean "without an obvious cause", so if "divine" is substituted then there is a very obvious cause: in fact the teleological argument for God by comparison with a watch and watchmaker. So does Conrad imply that when he uses the word chance he means Story-1 and determined?

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113 Ibid., p. 71.
114 Ibid., p. 244.
115 Ibid., p. 198.
116 Jakob Lothe, "Conrad's *Lord Jim*: Narrative and Genre", in Jakob Lothe, Jeremy Hawthorn, and James Phelan (eds), *Joseph Conrad: Voice, Sequence, History, Genre,* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008, p. 243.
117 Conrad, *Chance,* fn. 1, p. 334.

There are certainly many lines written in *Chance* that give this impression. Consider the following:

1. "The exacting life of the sea has this advantage over the life of the earth that its claims are simple and cannot be evaded."[118]

2. "There is necessity in these things."[119]

3. "That man's coming brought him face to face with necessity to speak and act a lie."[120]

4. "Existence has its claims which are obeyed mechanically."[121]

Quotes 1, 2 and 4 above assert that within the context of "not knowing" everything seems as of necessity. This is the essence of Story-1. Danto, too, argues that this is the case for most people. They "never having risen to the level of anguish, they have no anguish to escape or to try to escape".[122] The text of *Chance*, as has been seen, could not agree more: "[people are] for the most part incapable of understanding what is happening to them."[123] However, the third quotation gives the interpretation a different slant. "Face to face with necessity" suggests recognition of anguish and, therefore, necessity now means life is necessarily pointless, not that it must happen. Death must happen but life up to death has alternatives. The possibility of a "lie" will actualise the alternatives. There is a necessity but the necessity is to make the choice: that is choice within contingency. Awareness of existential angst means one has to commit Camusian suicide, or

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118 Ibid., p. 28.
119 Ibid., p. 196.
120 Ibid., p. 260.
121 Ibid., p. 274.
122 Danto, *Sartre*, p. 79.
123 Conrad, *Chance,* p. 91.

somehow live with the awareness, or hide the awareness: that is, lie about the logic of suicide.

Further, whether an event happens to a person because it might or because it must makes no real difference to the person - once it has happened. What matters is whether the individual could have had any direct influence. The text is aware of this consideration. In this sense it does agree with Baines that the novella is not about the "workings of chance". The text actually spells this out for the reader. Early on, when Flora goes missing and suicide is suspected, a conversation takes place between Fyne and Marlow. This conversation foregrounds the fact that the overall text is identifiable as one narrative-consciousness because Marlow takes both, of two opposite, points of view by himself and leaves Fyne a mere bystander. He first asks himself "Was it a tragedy?" and immediately afterwards rationally concludes: "This is a farce." Two possibilities are presented, but the text negates the apparent opposition by concluding that: "As a matter of fact it was neither farce nor tragedy."[124] The reader is told that chance is not to be put into opposition with a deterministic cause and effect; that it is not the paradox represented by p and not-p. They both exist within the world of the overt plot and some will explain events by the former and some by the latter. But whilst it is true that the book is not about the "workings of chance" as such, it does draw attention to the area: namely that these alternatives are different in kind from contingent where contingent means true by virtue of the way things are in fact and not by logical necessity. Ultimately the novella comes down to this view, and reasserts its status as an ESDeN, by asserting,

[124] Ibid., p. 45.

on its penultimate page: "And the science of life consists in seizing every chance that presents itself."[125] This is nothing short of a claim for the real meaning of *Chance*'s "chance". Life is contingent: it is so but need not have been. The narrative-consciousnesses exists as a matter of observable fact within a world that is not necessary, is doomed to ultimate extinction and holds out no external purpose. Nevertheless the narrative-consciousness enables the organism to continue to exist, make choices, and create individual projects within such a world of contingency. Given any event, once it has happened, there is nothing to do but "seize" the opportunity. And seizing the opportunity means amongst other things choosing which parts of a story to tell.

Flora's father spells-out the existential choice:

> But this sort of life! What sense, what meaning, what value has it either for you or me? It's just sitting down to look at death, that's coming, coming. What else is it? I don't know how you can put up with that. I don't think you can stand it for long. Some day you will jump over board.[126]

He clearly predicts suicide. This may remind the readers that, throughout the book, Flora has been constantly threatening suicide and there are a considerable number of other discussions on the possibility of death. Clearly in her ESDeS role as an aspect of the narrative-consciousness he would not be able to pair up with any putative partners if she had committed suicide. There would be no need, in this case, for a continuing story. However, it has to be presented as a possibility. Early in Flora's story, she goes for a walk on the cliff and it is only the proximity of

[125] Ibid., p. 329.
[126] Ibid., p. 292.

Marlow that prevents a suicidal jump. A flashback reveals that she had also considered the subject earlier after she had been sacked from a governess's job. Marlow reflects: "Suicide, I suspect, is very often the outcome of mere mental weariness."[127] He is making the point that these are not existential choices. Mrs Fyne also has her gender-political opinions: "She held, I suppose, that a woman holds an absolute right…to escape in her own way from a man mismanaged world."[128] On another occasions, de Barral obtains some poison presumably to use to avoid ignominy in the event of exposure for his fraudulent dealings. Later, on the *Ferndale*, de Barral expresses the view that "putting an end to one's existence may not be altogether unwelcome".[129] All of these involve what might be called normal, avoidable life events: loneliness, humiliation, politics and old age. In themselves they are interesting but within an ESDeS they act as distracters: the more interesting they are the more effective they are. Nevertheless, the text plays fair. It makes some existential examples available. One such is represented by Flora's attempt to jump off the cliff. Marlow's account of the event shows that she specifically rejects "Providence" as a reason for her survival. She claims the behaviour for herself:

> One reaches a point…where nothing that concerns one matters any longer. But something did keep her back. I should never have guessed what it was. She herself confessed that it seemed absurd to say. It was the Fyne dog.[130]

The observation conjures up a wonderful sense of absurdity. And, although Flora says "something" kept her back, the text makes it plain that the suicide attempt was

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127 Ibid., p. 138.
128 Ibid., p. 136.
129 Ibid., p. 219.
130 Ibid., p. 152.

"planned". The overall text, later, puts her actions in even more Sartrean existential terms when it has Captain Anthony say to Flora, "You are free [to choose]."[131] The captain means, of course, free in the sense that he will not be demanding of her marriage duties but, within an ESDeS analysis, it resonates with existential freedom, where recognition of anguish should lead to the view expressed in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* that "I apprehend myself at once as totally free and as not being able to derive the meaning of the world except as coming from myself".[132] Flora replies, "But I don't want to be let off." The narrative-consciousness is at the point of recognition. It intends Flora as project to continue. Suicide, as a solution to existential angst, is rejected as it was previously rejected by the choice in *Heart of Darkness.* The overall narrative-consciousness has to again learn to live with angst or to hide it. It must continue to look for meaning within its own resources. It still needs Flora as project to do something: to pair up with p or not-p. But she, as with the Marlow of *Heart of Darkness*, finds that the choice is not easy. She embarks on the process with a long series of trial runs of her own life. This starts after her mother dies[133] and her father is sent to prison.[134] She, at first, becomes a project for the Fynes but finds eventually that she can no longer tolerate being told what to do by Mrs Fyne. To solve this dilemma she, in the first instance, runs off (elopes) with Captain Anthony and, in the second, she collects her father and imposes him onto the marriage. She is in the middle: with father representing angst on the one side and Anthony on the other. The situation is not a happy one. Flora declares she

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131 Ibid., p. 318.

132 Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* trans. Hazel E. Barnes, London: Methuen, 1969, p. 40, quoted in Danto, *Sartre*, p. 79.

133 Conrad, *Chance,* p. 56.

134 Ibid., p. 67.

"can't go on",[135] but of course she has to choose. Flora can exist only in an axis with either de Barral or Anthony and the text makes it explicit that this is a choice between "dreariness and horror".[136] For a long spell the narrative-consciousness can choose neither one nor the other but ultimately the overall text chooses to let de Barral, and hence the Flora-de Barral axis, die and take angst with him leaving the project Flora-Captain Anthony as p to survive. Although it is Mr de Barral (not-p) who dies, the text allows the possibility that the angst axis could survive leaving p to die: "He [Captain Anthony] was looking down at Mr Smith, thinking perhaps that it was mere chance his own body was not lying there."[137] The narrative-consciousness now has to do two things. It has to convincingly hide not-p and it will do this by introducing a covert plot between an initiating absence and this death, and this will start the process of instating a new cover story.

Bracketing Deaths

There are five deaths and a death-like absence in *Chance.* The first two deaths take place outside of the text. Captain Anthony's mother and father die before the story begins, and can be safely overlooked. Then Flora's mother dies and her father goes to gaol and these deaths clearly precipitate the fictional story. Subsequently Mr de Barral dies and then in the last part of the novel Captain Anthony dies. Once the death of de Barral is recognised as the death that represents the point of recognition

135 Ibid., p. 317.
136 Ibid., p. 167.
137 Ibid., p. 321.

then it is clear that the covert plot will be found between his going to gaol and his death.

The Covert Plot

Since the overt plotting seems "relatively straightforward",[138] it might come as a surprise that *Chance* is often found to be "an extremely complex text"[139] because of its complexities of presentation which have given rise to a good "deal of critical comment".[140] Henry James regarded *Chance* as more concerned with technique than story. It is, he argues, "an extraordinary exhibition of method".[141] Brooks, likewise, suggests that the complexities arise out of "dense narrative layerings".[142] In the story of *Chance*, for example, de Barral's suicide is experienced by Powell who tells it to Marlow who tells it to the narrator who tells it to the reader. Every stage is fraught with transmission difficulties and it might be wondered why Conrad has included this complication. There are various views. Jocelyn Baines, for one example, feels that "there are only rare occasions when anything is gained from this cumbersome method of presentation".[143] Paul Wake is also aware of the problems inherent in too many embedded narrators, but thinks they might serve a useful purpose: "in foregrounding their own linguistic practices, [they] alert the reader to

138 Wake, *Conrad's Marlow*, p. 102.
139 Ibid., p. 103.
140 Ibid., p. 104.
141 Ibid.
142 Peter Brooks, "An Unreadable Report: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*", in Elaine Jordan (ed.), *Joseph Conrad*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996, p. 68.
143 Baines, *Joseph Conrad - A Critical Biography*, p. 382.

her/his role in the interpretative process."[144] This thesis believes it does so in a particular way that has already been raised on a number of previous occasions. One is generically called the problem of language. Peter Brooks in his essay "The Unreadable Report" is discussing *Heart of Darkness* but his ideas transfer to *Chance*. He assigns a name to the layers of telling: "ready made life plots – that the text casts up along the way: orders that marshal reality and might explain it if only one could believe them."[145] He concludes that they are not in fact to be believed, that they serve the function of "cover-up, concealment, lie"[146] which lead to a quite a dramatic conclusion to the "Horror!" scene. Brooks says that it seems "to make a mockery of storytelling and ethics, or to gull one's listeners".[147] Shoshana Felman recognises the same technique in the prologue of *The Turn of the Screw* (1898) which "rather *disconnects* the story from the narrator since it introduces not *one* narrator but *three*."[148] In short then multiple narrators can serve the purpose of covering up the truth and gulling the reader. Looked at like this the "cumbersome method of presentation" is seen to be no more that another hiding mechanism. Its use implies the existence of a covert plot.

Two further things come together with this conclusion to suggest an interesting way into the covert plotting of *Chance*. The first is to recall that Conrad uses a particular technique in his writing. It has been shown in chapter 2 that he was

144 Wake, *Conrad's Marlow*, p.101.
145 Brooks, "An Unreadable Report", p. 68.
146 Ibid., p. 68.
147 Ibid., p. 77.
148 Shoshana Felman, "Turning the Screw of Interpretation", in S. Felman (ed.), *Literature and Psychoanalysis. The Question of Reading Otherwise*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987, p. 121.

happy to mix up genres and to use the detective genre in particular. The second is to recall that the plot in *Heart of Darkness* turned out to be a collusive death plot. If this is assumed to be the case again then the way to disentangle the process is to go over the same journey in the same way as a detective follows a criminal. In this way the suicide of de Barral can be unpicked to, again, reveal another collusive death plot.

Mr de Barral's death sequence starts when Powell looks through a "skylight" from the deck into the "saloon, consecrated to the exclusiveness of Captain Anthony's married life".[149] He sees the captain pour a drink and then leave the room. Then he sees "a hand" emerge from behind a curtain, swerve to and rest on the edge of "the glass"[150] of "brandy" and "water"[151] and then draw back. He immediately rushes down to the cabin even though it is not clear why he does so. He does not exactly explain at this stage so Marlow and the reader are left perplexed. He answers Marlow's "Why?" with the strange answer: "It was the quickest dodge to get [Anthony] away from [the drink]."[152] When he arrives he debates at length whether or not to "remove the suspected tumbler" but eventually does not do so. He is joined by Anthony and is again tempted to "dash the glass on the deck"[153] but does not do so. He reveals at this stage that he thinks the drink has been "doctored": a piece of news Anthony takes calmly. Flora then arrives followed by de Barral. Talk ensues leaving Flora draped around Anthony's neck so he takes

149 Conrad, *Chance,* p. 304.
150 Ibid., p. 308.
151 Ibid., p. 305.
152 Ibid., p. 309.
153 Ibid., p. 311.

her out leaving Powell alone with de Barral. Further talk ensues and then de Barral picks up the glass and "tossed the liquor down his throat".[154] The death could be, and usually is, presented as a straightforward case of "suicide".[155] A half-way competent detective, however, would neither be prepared to accept Powell's testimony of this aspect of the incident nor any of the rest of his tale as it included in the text.

The text, however, warns the attentive reader that what is told on the surface is not the truth. Powell introduces the suicide scene with a curious statement: "He who has eyes, you know, nothing can stop him from seeing things as long as there are things to see in front of him."[156] Now the "you know" seems to suggest that the rest of the sentence is a paraphrase of a well known saying. In this case, it is suggested, the saying is slightly misquoted. Powell is referring to the biblical quotation: "Who hath ears let him hear."[157] The irony is, of course, that he is using the quotation as if the meaning is transparent, whilst the biblical version makes it clear that it means just the opposite. The quoted passage continues: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."[158] Ears and eyes are used interchangeably in this passage. In both cases it is intended that they should be understood figuratively and mean "understanding". The parable is intended to confuse and hide the truth[159] and is, therefore, making the same point as the "cumbersome presentation". This

154 Ibid., p. 320.
155 Wake, *Conrad's Marlow*, p. 121.
156 Ibid., p. 305.
157 Matt 13:9.
158 Matt 13:13.
159 See the detailed discussion above in the Story-1 section in chapter 3.

episode with Powell is intended to warn the reader that what is being observed is not the meaning of the text. With this prompt, it is appropriate to reread the story.

There are negatives and positives in the story as presented. On the negative side, Powell's evidence is presented third hand through Marlow and the narrator, both of whom seem to accept his testimony at face value. In fact it can be, to some extent, contradicted. If Captain Anthony was forced to testify he would have to say that when he re-entered his saloon he did not see de Barral. He would have to say he found only Powell in the cabin: "there, before him, stood his second officer, a seemingly decent, well-bred young man, who, being on duty, had left the deck and had sneaked into the saloon, apparently for the inexpressibly mean purpose of drinking up what was left of his captain's brandy-and-water."[160] His own testimony is not consistent. The first time he describes the so-called-doctoring of the glass he says he sees the hand "resting on its edge". When he next describes it the hand was "hovering over the glass". On neither occasion did he see anything drop into the drink so that it would merit the epithet "doctored". In fact, he later doubts his initiating premise. He thought to himself: "there's nothing in the drink. I have been dreaming, I have made an awful mistake."[161] The reason why he jumped to the conclusion at the time demands an explanation.

On the positive side, Powell's version of the story is backed by some evidence that he does not mention. It would seem that de Barral has a motive for

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160 Conrad, *Chance,* p. 310.
161 Ibid., p. 320.

killing the captain. He was jealous of his attachment to his daughter. "His brain" was filled with "a jealous rage"[162] when he hears of the marriage and he tells his daughter: "I would like to break his [Anthony's] neck."[163] This intent is constant. He says just before the suicide, "if I hadn't been an old man I would have flown at his throat months ago".[164] His failure to achieve his murderous intent is accompanied by the further humiliation involved in the way he loses the battle for Flora. Finally, these are grounds, as has already been seen, for believing that he agrees with suicide if occasion demands it. He reaffirms this on yet another occasion, which becomes appropriate here, when he tells his daughter: "once I could be sure that you were happy then of course I would have no reason to care for life."[165] The positives seem to overwhelm the negatives. De Barral's contribution to his own death seems proved. However, the others are not blameless.

There is no need to go down the road of directly implicating either Powell, Flora or the captain in the death by suggesting that the poison was put into the glass by one of them, although all three had the opportunity and were just as likely to have had the means. Nevertheless, there are two very significant reasons for thinking they have contributions to make. The first is that an intertextual literary illusion is used to signpost it. It is used just in case the reader has been so centred on the sad position of Flora that they have not picked up on the sad position of de

[162] Ibid., p. 267.
[163] Ibid., p. 269.
[164] Ibid., p. 320.
[165] Ibid., p. 292.

Barral. It tells the reader: "She [Flora] looked like a forsaken elf."[166] There can be no doubt that this is an intended literary reference because the text preceding this odd description announces Mr Powell as an "industrious reader".[167] The reference is of course to Pearl in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*: "Pearl, that wild and flighty little elf."[168] She, like Pearl, is surrounded by characters who are deeply self-deceiving and Hawthorne's novel has been regarded as the exemplary text on self-deception. It has been used extensively by this thesis to isolate the behavioural indicators that de Barral so fully exhibits. The reader of this thesis then should be well aware of the consequences of a sudden breakdown in the self-deceptive process. The thesis has gone into detail recording "Hickey's surprise and shock [when he discovered] he was in self-deception".[169] De Barral is, of course, another such hugely self-deceptive man that has to suffer the consequences of his actions: namely, the participatory efforts of the three plotters.

The text makes available the evidence to suggest that Anthony, Flora and Powell use a very pragmatic and clever means to induce de Barral's suicidal action. If the hypothetical detective retraces the steps through the agreed events of the story another version emerges. When the captain comes in to find Powell alone in his cabin the detective might note that he behaves strangely. He does not admonish Powell for spying or for fabricating. He seems to accept what is said as if it was no surprise: "The captain had a wonderful self-command." It was as if he had found

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166 Ibid., p. 315.
167 Ibid., p. 313.
168 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, London: Penguin, 1994, p. 97. Pearl is, of course, compared to an elf on a number of other occasions.
169 Herbert Fingarette, *Self-Deception*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960, p. 60.

"something to think about".[170] It is at this point that Flora and de Barral enter the room and the text notes that "each situation…has its psychological moment."[171] It is as if the captain had been waiting for this point and is ready to take full advantage of it. This is the point when their conspiracy actually surfaces.

Marlow tells the reader "we have the inner knowledge", and "we have the secret of the situation".[172] What does he mean? Well, he means the narrative-consciousness knows de Barral's psychological state. He had been the "great Mr de Barral" but is now useless, dependant on the good graces of his daughter and her husband and there is "nothing more futile than a bent poker".[173] He had been forced to witness his daughter marriage, without love: to be as unfortunate "as much as if [she] had gone on the streets".[174] He knows he cannot protect her and so "felt ashamed to live".[175] He is described on several occasions as expressing the wish for death. All that stands between him and his demise is his self-deception: his pipedream that a new start is around the corner and "only a matter of judicious advertising."[176]

Once all four participants are in the room, they collude in what follows. Flora, on cue, expresses her dismay: "I can't go on like this Roderick - between you

170 Conrad, *Chance,* p. 312.
171 Ibid., p. 315.
172 Ibid., p. 196.
173 Ibid., p. 272.
174 Ibid., p. 285.
175 Ibid., p. 302.
176 Ibid., p. 273.

two."[177] In the manifest plot and in front of her father Flora is seen "clinging round Captain Anthony's neck". The captain - now "exulting" - then removes her to the adjacent cabin and "what [they] done (sic) there will ne'er be known",[178] but could, no doubt, be imagined by de Barral who is, therefore, not just defeated but humiliated. He stutters out his feelings to Powell who he regards as his only friend: he had "no friends on board this shop…except [Powell]":[179]

> Who would have believed it? With her arms around his neck. When! Oh! Ha! Ha! You did see! Didn't you? It wasn't a delusion - was it? Her arms around … But I have never wholly trusted her.[180]

Powell could have commiserated with him for he knows he is his only friend, but he does not. He thrusts the dagger in deeper: "I flew out at him."[181] He could have prevented his actions but he does not, despite standing close enough to de Barral to grab his "shoulder".[182] The old man was too quick for the young man. He protests feebly: "He was too quick for me."[183] Faced with the "exulting"[184] captain, the deserting daughter, the disloyal friend and nowhere else to go, what else could he do? He cooperates with the judgement of the narrative-consciousness and "tossed the liquor down his throat".[185] De Barral has done a good job for the team.

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177 Ibid., p. 317.
178 Peggy Seeger and Ewan McColl, "Newfoundland folksong fragment", on *Two-way Trip*, Folkways Records, No. F8755, 1961.
179 Conrad, *Chance,* p. 294
180 Ibid., p. 319.
181 Ibid.
182 Ibid., p. 320.
183 Ibid., p. 321.
184 Ibid., p. 319.
185 Ibid., p. 220.

A final twist both provides a background for the revelation of the conspiracy and a link with *Heart of Darkness*. Anthony and Powell did not immediately announce de Barral's death. They contrived to put the body in its bunk to be found by the steward as Marlow contrived to have Kurtz found by the manager's boy. The "suicide" episode is thereby disguised as natural and the whole episode, which started with the captain telling Powell "Not a word!",[186] ends with him telling him: "Silence! Silence for ever about this."[187] The doubling of the wording, based on the template "The horror! The horror!" in *Heart of Darkness*, suggests added significance. It here suggests that the narrative-consciousness is revealing, again, that the characters are just aspects of the whole for the captain is able to say he "knew that the young man [Powell] understood him".[188] Finally, Marlow, as the overall narrative-consciousness, puts in his pennyworth of collusion. Strictly speaking there is no poison in the text prior to this point so Marlow invents a mechanism for de Barral to possess it. He does so, he says, to do away "with the added horror of a coldly premeditated crime".[189] It is best, he says, to give the credit to "chance".[190] Powell once again agrees and reiterates the purpose: "don't let us think about it."[191]

Now this is not the original covert plot invented by Cedric Watts. His concerned the attraction between Marlow and the Intended at the end of *Heart of*

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186 Ibid., p. 312.
187 Ibid., p. 321.
188 Ibid.
189 Ibid., p. 323.
190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.

Darkness which, he says, is "vicariously completed"[192] in *Chance.* It is true that in *Heart of Darkness* Marlow seems to acquire an attraction for the Intended and this gives him a motive for not being more proactive in saving Kurtz. Powell, in *Chance*, also acquires an attraction for Flora. It is reasonable to assume that Marlow went to see the Intended for this reason quite separate from any loyalty to Kurtz or duty to return papers. It is also reasonable, therefore, to assume that Powell was less than honest when he claims he could not stop the suicide. In fact he was quite happy to let it happen. He was horrified by the way Flora was treated and wanted it to end and maybe to replace de Barral in her affections. Watts thinks that Powell represents Marlow in the new telling and fulfils his destiny. An ESDeS reading accepts this but puts it differently. It was decided at the end of the last chapter that Marlow rejected the Intended as a project because she would not transcend her role and he needed to remain an individual to be free to take up choices. Marlow uses Powell to accept what Marlow could not accept: to act out his existential dilemma, his wish for authenticity but a longing for certainty.

ESDeS in the Overt Plot: From de Barral's Death

Flora declares she "can't go on". She means, of course, living with the mutually paradoxical ideas; being between her husband (p) and her father (not-p). But, given her suicidal tendencies this can only be taken to mean the time has come to choose. The captain brilliantly plays on her psyche. He refuses to put pressure on her: he

[192] Watts, *The Deceptive Text*, p.140.

says "I simply surrender."[193] The consequence of such a surrender would be that angst would win by default and de Barral acknowledges this with "a triumphant chuckling sound".[194] Anthony then puts his surrender into unambiguously existential terms: "You are free. I let you off."[195] Flora, equally unambiguously, rejects the chance to be authentic: "I don't want to be let off."[196] In rejecting freedom she adopts bad faith - just as the Intended chooses to be unhappy "for life".[197]

She chooses, therefore, Anthony, but this step in her story will be passed over for the time being. The thesis wants to continue her story from where Watts leaves off. The story does not end "happily" as suggested by Ray nor does it end with Flora and Anthony "happily married" as suggested by Wake. It ends, just like *Heart of Darkness,* in the codicil; in the "hurried" bit at the end when Powell is reacquainted with Flora and they, under Marlow's tutelage, are assumed to marry. This is the ending planned, says Watts, for *Heart of Darkness*. What is ESDeS to make of this marriage? It thinks this ending reiterates, more clearly, the conclusions it has already reached. It thinks the narrative-consciousness – now known as Marlow – is faced with the new existential paradox: it wants to retain its ability to choose but it also wants a project. The trouble is that project has evolved two sides; temporary and permanent: unserious and serious. Marlow as an aspect of Conrad's narrative-consciousness wanted to become normal but couldn't do it once he

193 Ibid., p. 317.
194 Ibid., p. 317.
195 Ibid., p. 318
196 Ibid.
197 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness,* p. 145.

identified the Intended with one half of the "nightmare".[198] The same applies in *Chance*. The narrative-consciousness called Marlow identifies Flora not as project ESDeS but as project dreariness. Angst is horror and middle-class certainty is dreariness. It wants to make this clear because it has not another book to go to so it finds it convenient to put the end before the end. The Flora-Powell axis is described by what went before; the Flora-Anthony axis. The thesis left *Heart of Darkness* aware that the Intended was not an individual free to choose but a role. She was a widow and "unhappy for – life". The thesis has left the covert plotting in *Chance* with Flora saying she "did not want to be free" and she identifies this lack of freedom with Captain Anthony. Flora, it seems, wanted to be in love with Anthony and to be happily married to Anthony. This is okay but not if she consumes herself as an entity and does not allow the possibility for change. Not if she adopts a role provided for her by society. Not if she has no life of her own apart from her role as a wife. She categorically rejects the call to be authentic. She accepts the alternative to authentic and opts for seriousness.

The ending does not, therefore, fulfil Marlow's ambition at the end of *Heart of Darkness*; it replicates it. The final part tells, as it did with *Heart of Darkness*, that life is not a romance but a survival in the face of existential awareness. The final sequence has Marlow decide, "I must…go alone."[199] This act leaves Powell and Flora behind. They represent, together, seriousness, as a copy of Flora and Anthony, whereas Marlow wants to be unserious. The narrative-consciousness

198 Ibid., p. 127.
199 Ibid., p. 330.

dispenses with two of its characters and chooses, again, to stay with Marlow. Flora and Powell remain as the Intended remained and Marlow "goes" again as he "escaped" in *Heart of Darkness*. He knows, however, that his freedom is only "provisional": that seriousness and existential awareness will always threaten. He has Powell remind him of this: "You shall hear from me before long." Marlow observes: "This was yesterday….I haven't heard yet; but I expect to hear any moment."[200] He, for a moment, is as near as it is possible to come to a truly existential man. But even he knows he will not be able to sustain his unseriousness for long for he still lingers in a belief that there is meaning. This telling ends with: "Hang it all, for all my belief in Chance [or choice?] I am not exactly a pagan."[201] He is an ESDeS man: he knows he will need another project.

[200] Ibid.
[201] Ibid.

Chapter 6

Thinks: A Contemporary ESDeN

A narrative-consciousness is a narrative that can take the form of an ESDeS or Story-2. The purpose of the narrative is to not notice awareness of existential angst. The adoption of the ESDeS method of accommodating existential angst is both developmental and cultural. At any given point in history some people will remain at Story-1 whilst others have to move on to Story-2. *Heart of Darkness* recognises this by differentiating between Marlow and the "savage who was fireman…He was useful because he had been instructed; and what he knew was this – that should the water in the transparent thing disappear, the evil spirit inside the boiler would get angry."[1] *Chance* reiterates this point, as has already been mentioned: "people, whether mature or not mature are for the most part quite incapable of understanding what is happening to them."[2] In contrast Marlow observes of himself that "surely life must be amused somehow".[3] The developmental change within an individual is reflected in the self-deceptive-process interpretation of their overt plot. The character is forced, by their experiences, to reach their point of recognition. Conrad, however, makes this point even more explicitly, as we have seen, with his evocative description of the individual's development: "Going up the river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world."[4] This line is glossed, by Brooks, as "Marlow's journey repeats ontogenetically, a kind of reverse phylogeny, an

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1 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* in *Youth/Heart of Darkness/The End of the Tether*, London: Penguin, 1995, p. 92.
2 Joseph Conrad, *Chance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 91.
3 Ibid., p. 91.
4 Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 88.

unravelling of the threads of civilisation."[5] Martin Ray picks up this thread with his mirror image statement of the development of *Chance* as "like a fossil record of the changes in Conrad's style over the years of its writing".[6] The individual's accommodation with existential futility can be achieved by either the adoption of seriousness or, on a temporary basis, by the use of a current ESDeS. In the latter case a new point of recognition will eventually force its way into the narrative-consciousness at which point it will have to repeat or replace its story. *Thinks* has been chosen to represent a contemporary example of such a replacement.

It ostensibly tells the tale of relationships at "a 'greenfields' university".[7] It describes a growing relationship between Ralph Messenger and Helen Reed. Ralph is the head of the psychology department and Helen is a visiting creative writing teacher. Helen arrives at the university campus whilst in a state of depression following the death of her husband. She remains faithful to Martin's memory until she discovers that nearly everybody else on the campus, in the present, and Martin, in the past, live by a different set of values. Carrie, Ralph's wife, has a liaison with Nicholas Beck. Ralph has relationships with Marianne and with Ludmilla and wants one with Helen. Martin has had relationships with numerous research assistants including one who turns up on Helen's course. Helen is, therefore, eventually seduced into a sexual relationship. This is short lived. It comes to an end due to a combination of circumstances: Ralph discovers he might have a

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5 Peter Brooks, "An Unreadable Report: Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*", in Elaine Jordan (ed.), *Joseph Conrad*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996, p. 71.

6 Martin Ray, "Introduction", to Conrad, *Chance,* p. xv.

7 David Lodge, *Thinks*, London: Penguin, 2002, p. 10.

terminal illness, he encroaches on Helen's privacy by reading her journal and Helen's contract comes to an end anyway. In between, one of Ralph's colleagues, Duggers, is mentioned from time to time until he commits suicide to avoid arrest for downloading child pornography.

This plot and further various sub-plots are presented through three points of view. Ralph's contributions are given in the form of a flow of consciousness audio diary and takes up about a fifth of the novel. Helen's contributions are given in the form of a written journal and takes up a little less than two-fifths. The narrator's point of view is given in third person reportage and takes most of the remainder. The reportage is unusual in that it is in the present tense. There are, in addition, other public domain intrusions in the form of student essays, letters and emails but these can, by Lodge's own admission, be omitted since "you could cut them out, you wouldn't notice".[8] Strictly speaking he only says this of the literary exercises but the emails between Ralph and Ludmilla come into the same category. They are there only as a result of his visit to Prague.[9] The visit is an occasion for him to indulge in rich food which in turn provides a reason for feeling ill. He ascribes his feeling ill to chronic indigestion, but his description of the symptoms gives the reader a chance to anticipate the diagnosis of a more serious illness. As a consequence of the visit Ralph has an affair. It is inevitable given the nature of Ralph's character: he cannot go abroad without indulging in an affair. Ludmilla, however, is incidental to both the ongoing overt plotting and to an ESDeS reading.

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[8] David Lodge, "A conversation about *Thinks",* in David Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel,* London: Secker and Warburg, 2002, p. 285.

[9] Lodge, *Thinks*, p. 214.

The theory of the narrative-consciousness, as developed by this thesis, requires three initial premises: the organism is merely a machine which writes a narrative which mainly tells about the producer. *Think*s is a particular text and is therefore a particular narrative-consciousness; it might be given the name David Lodge for convenience. There is both authorial and textual justification for this assertion.

Lodge describes himself as "a teacher of fiction and therefore a very self-conscious novelist" and as a novelist who is "very conscious of what [he] is doing".[10] In addition he has strenuously denied, in a conversation with Kate Daniels,[11] that his characters (with particular reference to Ralph and Helen) have any life other than that which he gives to them. He also asserted that Helen's mature views, as represented by her speech to the consciousness-conference, are his own. Helen's views, in the novel, include the claim that: "Real writing is inevitably a kind of self-exposure."[12] By this she means "it reveals indirectly your fears, desires, fantasies, priorities".[13] Although Helen doesn't actually say the words she would clearly include awareness of existential futility if she had wanted to make this plain. The thesis would want to go further and claim that Helen expresses the end conclusion of the narrative-consciousness called Lodge. It also wants to claim that *all* the characters, in this model, are to be seen merely as aspects of the primary

[10] Lodge, "A conversation about *Think*s", p. 296.
[11] David Lodge and Kate Daniels, "Consciousness and the Novel: Writer and Novelist David Lodge in Conversation with Kate Daniels", which took place at The Tavistock, Tuesday 17 February, 2004.
[12] Lodge, *Think*s, p. 111.
[13] Ibid.

narrative-consciousness. More specifically it sees Helen and the narrator as the representatives of the proposition, p – the belief that life has a meaning - Duggers as the representative of the proposition, not-p – the awareness that it does not. Ralph sits in between these two extremes and represents the choice. The physical division of the brain into two separately functioning hemispheres connected by a communicating corpus callosum is an appropriate metaphor. The narrative whole becomes, then, dividable into two main divisions corresponding to p and not-p and these are called the overt plotting and the covert plotting. These act out an ESDeS reading of the novel in which the tension lies in whether Ralph eventually adopts Helen's solution to the existential problem or whether he adopts Duggers's.

The manifest text justifies Lodge's claim that he is a "very self-conscious novelist" for *Thinks* acknowledges all premises required by the theory of narrative-consciousness. It has Ralph state, referring to Helen: "You're a machine that's been programmed by culture not to recognise that it's a machine."[14] It then, as Ralph, explains the function of the machine: "We make up stories about ourselves."[15] Whatever the merits of Ralph's case it does foreground the observable fact that stories *are* told. In fact the readers only know about Ralph and Helen from the stories they tell. This, in effect, foregrounds the idea of the narrative nature of the self. Even the narrator comes into this category for he often lets slip that *he* is an omniscient narrator.

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[14] Ibid., p. 102. In his conversation with Craig Raine, Lodge explains what he means by "machine": "Consciousness is like software being run on the hardware of the brain's machine....consciousness is a virtual machine. So anything that processes information is a machine – that doesn't mean it's made of metal and wires and things. It can just be a binary system", Lodge, "A conversation about *Thinks*'", p. 290.

[15] Lodge, *Thinks*, p. 99.

Why storytelling is so ubiquitous is also touched upon. Helen repeats the now well-worn argument: "Of course one can argue that there's a basic human need for narrative."[16] This argument on its own might be called the *it-is-just-so* argument but Helen provides more than this and, in so doing, introduces the ESDeS's third premise. She says, in a short interchange with Ralph: "I suppose that's why people read novels…. To find out what goes on in other people's heads."[17] Ralph takes up her point of view and turns it around: "But all they really find out is what goes on in the writer's head."[18] The text then spends the bulk of the novel attempting to illustrate and justify Ralph's, and this thesis's, assertion. It does so in a number of ways: through its presentational technique, its thematic content and its choice of plots, in addition to the direct authorial contribution provided by Lodge.

Presentational techniques include the splitting of the narrative-consciousness with use of multiple voices and then its rejoining by identifying one voice with another. The novel uses multiple voices which means that events are often presented three times. This might suggest that three points of view are provided but closer examination quickly establishes that this method only serves to identity each character with each other and with Lodge. There are three important examples of this: the "disappearance" scene, the "kiss" scene and the "I'm leaving" scene. In each the identity of the description suggests identity of source. The "disappearance" refers to Helen's walk around the campus. Ralph observes her from his office and

[16] Ibid., p. 63.
[17] Ibid., p. 42.
[18] Ibid.

says "she'd disappeared into thin air".[19] For Helen this becomes, "I slipped into the chapel".[20] The omniscient narrator attempts to give the event some objectivity by putting the two together in a direct speech interchange:

> "You seemed to disappear into thin air."
> "Did I?"
> "Where were you?"
> "I went into the chapel."[21]

The "kiss" scene gives another even more identical series of descriptions. Ralph steals his first kiss as the two emerge from the hot pool. Helen says, "I didn't resist",[22] Ralph reports, "she didn't resist",[23] whilst the narrator confirms that Helen "does not resist".[24] This kiss clearly took place and the action is in the public domain but the concept of resistance is a private one. It is not really possible for the narrator to say Helen "did not resist". To legitimately make this value judgement the narrator requires an additional source of information: the mask of objectivity slips. Finally, in the scene where Ralph refuses to be sympathetic to Helen's sadness over her husband's death, the three reporters again use much the same words. Helen gets angry and "almost got up and left him at the table".[25] This is an internal thought and is not, like her actions "going into the chapel" and to a lesser extent "the kiss", available in the public domain. Ralph observes her (lack of) behaviour and forms an opinion: "I thought for a moment she was going to walk

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19 Ibid., p. 8.
20 Ibid., p. 28.
21 Ibid., p. 33.
22 Ibid., p. 103.
23 Ibid., p. 118.
24 Ibid., p. 102.
25 Ibid., p. 62.

away."[26] The narrator describes the same event: "she looks…angry enough to get up and leave him sitting at the table."[27] It is legitimate for both Ralph and the narrator to observe her behaviour but for both to correctly infer from it the affect, anger, may be possible but since she does not get up and go for both to infer that was a possibility seems less likely.

The voices of all three then seem to emerge from the same source. They then recombine. The voices of Helen and the narrator are most obviously intended to merge as one. Helen finds her experience such that she says: "I still shrink from examining the experience with the straight unflinching eye of the first person. Let me try another way."[28] The other way involves adopting the same third person storytelling technique as the narrator. Craig Raine suggests some textual evidence that Helen and the narrator are different because the quality of their writing differs. He suggests that Helen is only a mediocre writer. Helen's writing is perceived "not brilliant" and full of "cliché" whilst the narrator's writing is described as "brilliant".[29] He cites Ralph's and Sandra Pickering's suggestions that her writing has limitations. Lodge says, in her defence, that he intended Helen to be a good novelist who "won prizes and was approved of by the *Spectator*".[30]

In addition to presentational techniques the text provides direct thematic content with respect to the ongoing consciousness debate between Ralph and Helen

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26 Ibid., p. 59.
27 Ibid., p. 34.
28 Ibid., p. 258.
29 Lodge, "A conversation about *Thinks*", p. 287.
30 Ibid.

and this overlaps with the "reading the journal" plot. Ralph argues: "We never know for certain what another person is really thinking."[31] Lodge probably bases this thinking on Henry Green. He notes in his essay "Consciousness and the Novel":

> Henry Green persevered with the dialogue novel to the end of his writing life, in books like *Nothing* (1950) and *Doting* (1952). In two radio talks broadcast at about that time, he defended this method, and criticised the fictional convention by which the narrator claims a privileged knowledge of the consciousness of the characters: "Do we know, in life, what other people are really like?" he asked. "I very much doubt it. We certainly do not know what other people are thinking and feeling. How then can the novelist be so sure?"[32]

Helen counters this argument with "novelists have been doing that [succeeding] for the last two hundred years",[33] and provides evidence for her point of view by quoting a passage from James which she seems to think shows that James is speaking the mind of Kate Croy in *Wings of a Dove*. Ralph retorts: "James can [only] claim to know what's going on in Kate Whatshername's head because he put it there, he invented her."[34]

Ralph wants to swop his audio diary with Helen's journal in an attempt to overcome this limitation. If the journal is like his own "flow of consciousness" diary then it would at least show what was in Helen's consciousness at the particular time it was written. However, it also has a more direct narrative function. The

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31 Lodge, *Thinks*, p. 41.
32 Lodge, *Consciousness and the Novel*, p.80.
33 Lodge, *Thinks*, p. 41.
34 Ibid., p. 42.

illicit reading returns the reader back to both an ESDeS genre-marker for the reading and to the main plotting. It exposes Ralph's self-deception and the Carrie and Nicholas Beck campus relationship. Ralph is being cheated on by Carrie without, apparently, knowing it. He, like all self-deceivers, has chosen to accept evidence that supports his state and ignore evidence which is against it. He and everyone else, including the reader, is led to believe that Nicholas is "a celibate homosexual"[35] and his meetings with Carrie are purely for the purposes of buying antiques. There would have undoubtedly been contrary evidence. The reader is presented with the same clues available to Helen and, by implication, to Ralph. The clues are overlooked until the evidence becomes too strong. Carrie's car is seen parked in Nicholas's driveway. Helen notes that Charlotte and Prince in *The Golden Bowl* start their love affair in Gloucester. Helen then actually spots the two kissing in a tea room. Ralph eventually admits to discovering the affair when presented by written testimony from Helen's journal.

Having established that *Thinks* is a narrative-consciousness it becomes legitimate to read it as an ESDeS. To do so this analysis is, as in previous chapters, carried out under subheadings. In this case three are sufficient: "Overt Plotting", "Genre-Marking" and "Covert Plotting". The ESDeS version of the overt plot does not exist as expected for a more contemporary ESDeN because Lodge presumably doesn't long for past certainties as much as Conrad and the bracketing deaths are included with the covert plotting section.

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[35] Ibid., p. 23. See also other references such as "celibate" (p. 116).

Overt Plotting

The manifest plot has already been outlined. At first reading it might be thought that it seems a bit light. If so, the reader who has expectations of a writer of Lodge's reputation will look deeper in order to find interpretations. Craig Raine does this. He suggests that *Thinks* is about "intimacy", whereas Lodge thinks that the "novel is about consciousness in all its aspects"[36] and wants Helen "to be confronted with a whole set of deceptions".[37] Either way, as this thesis has argued throughout, knowledge of the overt plot is not of interest except insofar as it distracts from the covert plotting or it includes a self-deceptive process. The latter is deemed to be a hangover from Story-1 and is expected to disappear as unnecessary when the Story-2 becomes established. This is the case in *Thinks*. The former point is a purely empirical question: is the overt plotting, in fact, sufficiently distracting to successfully hide the covert plotting? In this case, the covert plot concerns a character called Duggers. It can be easily demonstrated that it is *not* noticed since, in two very detailed conversations,[38] the significance of Duggers, for an ESDeS, was not mentioned.

In the conversation between Lodge and Craig Raine, Duggers is mentioned by name only twice. On both occasions, Lodge's answers to Raine's observations have a flavour of disingenuity. On the first occasion Duggers comes up as incidental to the topic of intuition. Raine and Lodge are discussing the topic and

36 Ibid., p. 292.
37 Ibid., p. 294.
38 With Craig Raine and Kate Daniels.

even suggest that it exists as some sort of immaterial communication system. Duggers is put forward as part of an example: "He commits suicide at the very moment that Ralph hears he is reprieved."[39] Lodge's explanation is vague at the very least and perhaps intentionally evasive: "Ralph's tempted by the idea that it's not a complete coincidence, that there must be *some kind of system* behind this."[40] Indeed there is. If Lodge intends the book to be an ESDeN then he would not want to acknowledge the possibility of a specific system because this would be to point, too clearly, to a covert plot and, hence, invalidate the purpose of the novel. This thesis, however, does allocate importance to the coincidence of possible deaths. Duggers commits suicide and carries off existential angst allowing other aspects of the narrative-consciousness to move on to new projects. The second time Duggers is mentioned is in connection with the "flexing" of his gloves. Raine notes that a doctor, in an embedded story, has the same "flexing" mannerism and sees significance, not in Duggers, but in the repetition of the action. Lodge denies intent here, but the tone of his answer is interesting. He says to Raine: "You're an *incredibly* attentive reader. Not many people would notice. They're separated by about twenty pages."[41] Clearly if Lodge wants to hide anything (in a covert plot say) he would expect only the odd "unbelievably attentive reader" to notice the hiding if the links are twenty or more pages apart. Everybody else would *not notice*. There is a third reference to Duggers in the conversation. It is not by name but by the appellation minor character. Craig Raine draws attention to a minor character, Annabel Riverdale, as suitable for development. Lodge could have said that he

39 Lodge, "A conversation about *Thinks*". p. 289.
40 Ibid., p. 290. My emphasis.
41 Ibid., p. 299.

could not develop every minor character but that he thought it was sufficient to develop Duggers. But he does not. Lodge squashes the whole line of thought: "I could have spread myself, followed up more of the characters. But I am not sure that would have been a good idea."[42] Given the existence and coherence of the Duggers covert plot this answer is at best disingenuous.

Finally it is noted that a further conversation about *Thinks* took place three years later - between Kate Daniels and Lodge - with a reading list that included the Craig Raine conversation. Despite this potential starting point and despite the fact that the audience consisted, for the most part, of trained psychotherapists, there was not a single mention of Duggers.

Given, then, that it can be taken as an established fact that the Duggers covert plot is not noticed even by "incredibly attentive readers", two related questions can now be considered: "Is the covert plot fairly signposted?" and "What is the covert plot?"

Genre-Marking

There is textual evidence of uneasiness, self-deception, death and futility, hiding, collusion and repetition in *Thinks*. These are interlinked but for the sake of convenience subtitled. The techniques adopted by *Thinks* include some adopted by

[42] Ibid., p. 295.

the other exemplar texts but, in addition, it also uses two techniques that Lodge has expressed a particular affection for: "allusion and joke"[43] and "double "function".[44]

(i) Uneasiness

The uneasiness genre-marker is put in to encourage readers to think that there must be more to the text than appears at first reading. *Think*s does not in this case make use of uneasiness as a motif word or other word ambiguities directly. However, there are three anecdotal aspects to its narration that turn out to be very indicative.

The first and second are connected and crucial and are, indirectly, connected to the ambiguous title technique: the names in the book can be given additional significance. Duggers, for example, is introduced into the text in various ways: as "Professor D. C. Douglass" on his office door; as "Duggers" as an approaching person; as "Douglas C. Douglass" when being introduced and, finally, as "Professor Douglass" when being addressed directly.[45] The combination of his complete name and title is never given, and, after this flourish of activity, he is only ever referred to as Duggers. Then, before he or his conversation can be developed, an emergency arises. The computer system has crashed.[46] This might not be regarded as an unusual event but it is made so, in this context, because the computer system is called "Captain Haddock" which is very obviously a literary intrusion. Lodge

43 Lodge, "A conversation about *Thinks"*, p. 296.
44 Ibid., p. 298.
45 Ibid., pp. 54-55.
46 Ibid., p. 56.

makes the allusion clear in this case: Helen has observed earlier that the name comes from the Tintin books.[47] Douglas Douglass is placed alongside a literary allusion. Lodge, knowing author that he is, cannot be unaware that the archetypal character with the same first and last name is Humbert Humbert.[48] Further, in this case, the doubling is underscored for his surname, "Douglass", has a double letter.[49] Finally, as if this is not enough, the text has linked this letter doubling and this name doubling to a computer and to fishiness.

The third intrusion of unease is related less generally to fishiness and more specifically to perverse sexual activity. Out of character sexual terminology sometimes jars and somehow draws attention to itself. It is legitimate for the text to establish Ralph's predatoriness and Helen's frustrated state of mind but sometimes anecdotes are included that either go beyond this or clash with other aspects of a character. The relation of Ralph's first experience is an example of this. In his audio diary, he describes his early sexual encounters with an older woman, Martha Beard, and it jars: certainly when he tells Carrie about it she is not impressed. However, it is her choice of language to describe it that jars most. Carrie is portrayed, elsewhere in the text, as not making a noise "unless we are alone in the house"[50] and as not walking around naked:[51] in short, as somewhat prudish. As such the language she uses is out of character and this arouses unease. She says of Ralph's first partner, in her interchange with him: "She was a sexually frustrated

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47 Ibid., p. 45.
48 See Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita,* London: Penguin, 1997, p. 44
49 It follows therefore that he can be referred to as either Douglas or Douglass.
50 Ibid., p. 2. And again, p. 153.
51 Ibid., p. 74.

adult who used your adolescent dick as a dildo."[52] It is more the sort of expression Ralph would use. More like his "I'd like to listen to it again and masturbate to it in memory of Isabel Hotchkiss"[53]. The overlapping of language lessens the distinctiveness of the characters. But this is not a criticism. The text is like *Party Going.* It is making the point that the characters all come from the same source: that they all "flex" their fingers in the same way.

If the telling does cause unease it will be well for the reader to bear in mind two facts: Ralph's account of an event may be unreliable and this anecdote links him to sexual abuse, which in turn will link him, eventually, to Duggers.

(ii) Self-deception

Helen and her, now dead, husband Martin are an archetypal self-deceptive pair, as described by Trivers in chapter 1. Martin is a serial betrayer, but this betrayal is "not noticed" by Helen. As a result she brings up her children as well as she can. The deception is revealed by Sandra Pickering,[54] who is Martin's ex-lover and Helen's current student. Helen, once she accepts the deception, is able to reflect:

> A number of little incidents and enigmas, that I had hardly recognised at the time, suddenly came back sharply into focus, charged with implication. A shirt or two of his that unaccountably disappeared. Phone calls that went dead when I answered. Messages that he would have to work late.[55]

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52 Ibid., p. 70.
53 Ibid., p. 5.
54 See ibid., p. 201.
55 Ibid., p. 202.

The fact that the evidence had been available and had been overlooked is an essential characteristic of self-deception. The fact that Helen is able to, and chooses to, spell-it-out after the event is also a fundamental characteristic of self-deception. This, however, is just an example of normal-self-deception.

Earlier, the text had already presented another, more illustrative, example. It may have been overlooked because readers are not yet aware of Helen's normal-self-deceptive tendencies. It is more important because her behaviour points to the possibility of an ESDeS through self-deception linking with the idea of absurdity. It starts off in the context of normal, morally suspect, self-deception. In this *Thinks* scenario Ralph is putting pressure on Helen to start an affair, but up to the relevant scene she makes a big point of being loyal to Martin's memory. Before she actually "accepted" the first "mouth to mouth"[56] kiss which signalled the start of the affair she indulges in a classic example of bad faith. Her exhibition of bad faith almost exactly mirrors Sartre's defining example. Sartre has his exemplar "woman"[57] pretend she does not notice her aspiring lover's intentions towards her. She leaves her hand to be held by him "but she does not notice that she is leaving it".[58] Helen chooses in a similar fashion: "I felt his foot touch mine once or twice in the hot tub, but I thought it was just accidental, it never crossed my mind that he had any amorous intentions."[59] How could this be true? How could it never have crossed

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[56] Ibid., p. 103.

[57] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness,* trans. Hazel E. Barnes, London: Methuen, 1969, p.55.

[58] Ibid., pp. 55-56. For a full and readable, description, see Mary Warnock, *Existentialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 102.

[59] Lodge, *Thinks*, p. 103

her mind when she had already had a "presentiment that he was going to kiss me on the cheek"?[60]

There are other examples of self-deception of course but this bad faith episode exemplifies the essence of *Thinks* and emerges more fully in the next section.

(iii) Meaning

A meaning genre-marker comes in many forms in order to transform self-deceptive unease into existentially-self-deceptive unease. Existential meaning is hinted at within the overt plot but its genre-marking really comes from its connection to its undesirable alternative. *Thinks* does this brilliantly by placing unseriousness in opposition to seriousness. The latter is placed firmly into the overt plotting and the former is left hidden in the covert structure.

The narrative-consciousnesses in *Heart of Darkness* and *Chance* are shown as going through the existential-self-deceptive process in detail whereas Ralph and Helen are not: the characters in *Thinks* take angst as self-evident if they think of it at all. They defend themselves from ESD awareness by adopting the middle-class form of bad faith or seriousness. *Thinks* illustrates the process of recognition and the process of narration for the reader but not for the characters. Sartre illustrates the point of

[60] Ibid., p. 70.

recognition with what Danto calls "Roquentin's shattering vision":[61] that is Roquentin experiencing "nausea". Conrad has Kurtz repeat the experience with his "Horror" scene. Both authors emphasise the discovery and relegate the effect of this experience to second place: to mere descriptive mention. They both see their respective contemporaries as contemptible because *they* are seen to be serious about their projects. Both authors see the cause and effect process to be first futility and then, after, the seeing of projects as unserious. Lodge – in contrast - never has *his* characters seeing their projects as unserious. The whole novel is permeated by the middle-class complacency and moral certainties that Roquentin and Marlow so hated: Gloucester is added to the streets of Bouville and Brussels and London. It is almost impossible to read the book unless one is, already, part of the scene: that is, aware of its social and cultural boundaries. Lodge cleverly drops names into the plotting in such a way that the reader could be excused for assuming the fictional characters are real so enmeshed are they in the "real". Sometimes a particular reader will recognise a reference and sometimes not. Either way, readers, in general, are introduced to the correct way of behaving. Consensus is established between middle-class intellectuals using suitable snide comments about target political figures (Blair and Bush), by referring to "appropriate" films (*Ghost*) and its actors (Goldberg and Moore). The "right" artists (including Max Karinthy of the mural scene – presumably Kadinsky?), novelists (Amis, Welsh, Rushdie, Beckett, Weldon, James, Stein, Bauby and many others), philosophers (Watson, Nagel, Searle and many others) and scientists (Shrödinger, Penrose, Turing and many others) tell the reader who is currently important and, by omission, who is not. The

[61] Arthur C. Danto, *Sartre*, Glasgow: Fontana, 1979, p. 37.

characters drink the right wine ("This Beaujolais is really very decent"[62]) and aspire to proper schools. Helen and Martin baptise their children into the Catholic faith because "the local Catholic primary school was better than the state ones and we couldn't afford private education".[63] North London Collegiate[64] and Manchester and Oxford (they are described as "real places with real people in them") follow. The prevailing cultural norm is concerned with these common concerns and it is, therefore, in this context that the characters have to show they are not naive with respect to death and futility and the ephemeral nature of consciousness. Helen provides most of the references as Ralph is portrayed as incurably optimistic. She is depressed after her husband's death and comes to the university to do something to get over it. But she is not convincing. She says that "inventing fictitious characters and making things up for them to do seems so futile",[65] but this relates more to her self-deceptive personality than to a genuine process of recognition. She manifestly does not make up characters or invent things for them to do. At best she takes "good care not to use anything in a way that would embarrass anyone".[66] Her assertion is pretentious. However, she does come very close to genuine existential angst when she has a session reflecting on the plight of Jean-Dominique Bauby. Her thoughts lead her to a statement that mirrors closely the initial premise of this thesis:

> *Homo sapiens,* by virtue of his sudden surge in brain-power, apprehends his own mortality, and is so appalled by the discovery that he makes up a story.[67]

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62 Lodge, *Thinks*, p. 171.
63 Ibid., p. 29.
64 Ibid., p. 203.
65 Ibid., p. 15. See also p. 33, p. 35, etc.
66 Ibid., p. 211.
67 Ibid., p. 107.

She then concludes that the Adam and Eve story can be reinterpreted: "The fall of man was a fall into self-consciousness, and God a compensatory fiction."[68]

These are passing reflections. The essences of the characters making up this narrative-consciousness remain defended by ESDeS until the very end of the novel. Ralph, even when faced with his own imminent death, remains enmeshed in trivial problems: the consciousness conference, his affair with Helen, his trouble with funding and his involvement with Ludmilla. Helen too, even when being enmeshed in deceptions and toying with her existential awareness, becomes "panicky at the thought"[69] of giving her talk. The material concerns of *Almayer's Folly* – wealth, status and love – are retained by these characters even in the face of expressed futility.

The existential theme is, however, available in a disguised sense. Raine almost picks up on it, more theoretically, in another context. He sees significance in the name Messenger in the same way as this thesis sees significance in the name Douglas(s):

> What about Messenger's name? He brings the news? What is the news? Is it that Eros and Thanatos are linked? *Thinks…*begins with Isabel Hotchkiss and sex, but it turns out she died of breast cancer. So sex and death are there at the beginning. And the novel almost ends with the same conclusion.[70]

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68 Ibid., p. 108.
69 Ibid., p. 311.
70 Lodge, "A conversation about *Thinks*", pp. 297-298.

The argument is not disavowed by Lodge; it is ignored. He enters, instead, into a long rambling diversion which ends with an observation that the same set of events can serve a "double function". He recalls Ralph's first sexual encounter. It takes place on a sheep farm with the farmer's wife, Martha Beard. The anecdote, he says, "turns out to have another function".[71] Not only does Martha provide his first sexual encounter but the sheepdogs provide the virus which causes his later illness. This is good plotting for the overt story but the incomplete Eros-Thanatos interpretation and its dismissal need explanations. A first explanation comes as a logical corollary to the framing. It makes the existential point that everything in between is just a project. Lodge provides textual support for this supposition. Carrie is writing a book: Helen gives her encouragement and Ralph puts the encouragement into words: "It's just what Carrie needs, a project of her own that's really fulfilling."[72] But the way the manifest plotting is done suggests that going down this logical, conflicted route is, again, better described as middle-class superficiality or bad faith. Alternatively Lodge does not answer because to do so would mean pointing out that the book did, in fact, both start *and* end with Eros and Thanatos. This would point, once again, to ESDeS and to covert plotting. *Thinks* does start and end in "sex and death" but only if properly put. Sex might more properly be depicted as life or self-preservation. Within an ESDeS the terms do not relate to the actual and the linking but to the choice between them. They are neither put as inevitable and sequential nor as simultaneous nor as conflicting: they are

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71 Ibid., p. 298.

72 Lodge, *Thinks*, p. 171.

alternatives. If Lodge's "double function" claim is a basic technique then he might want to add to Raine's claim that Ralph's name is significant. Messenger carries information in two distinct ways: about life and death and, also more directly as the link character between the overt plotting and the covert plotting. That is, information is carried between the Helen story and the covert story. He is the narrative-consciousness's "corpus callosum". The ESDeS represents the process which enables a resolution between p and not-p. Self-preservation – not sex - is the alternative to death. Duggers has adopted death (but *he* is not noticed), leaving the book to extol the moving on (life) of Helen and Ralph. Ralph has moved over into the "right" hemisphere with Helen. He has been preserved at the expense of Duggers.

(iv) Hiding

The two observations that Duggers is not noticed and life goes on prove that the covert plot (if it exists) has been successfully hidden. But has the reader been given enough information to justify the claim that the covert plot is available and intentional? The answer to this is multi-faceted. The text gives plenty of genre-markers in other areas but, at a first reading, seems weak on hiding genre-markers. Whereas Marlow, for example, constantly makes direct reference to the need for hiding and the need for forgetting, Ralph and his colleagues do not, obviously, do so. Maybe it is not even necessary. The characters within the overall story are all acting-out, as has been seen in the last section, stereotypical roles. However, further

genre-marking can be teased out by again adopting Lodge's philosophy of "double function". The need for evasion comes up with respect to two subjects: infidelity and death.

The first example relates directly to death and pretence. Carrie's father has a serious heart attack and might possibly die. One of her children, Hope, asks directly whether he will die and follows this up with "what happens to people when they die?"[73] This is a perfectly normal question which leads to a perfectly normal dispute between the parents. Ralph wants to tell the truth and Carrie wants to pretend. In addition to the interest in the debate itself, the possible death provides for a distracter in the form of an irrelevant separation: irrelevant, that is, to the covert plotting. For overt plotting purposes the possible death means Carrie will fly to America and Ralph will be given the space to progress his affair with Helen. The movement with the overt plot obscures the second alternative in the Lodgean double function. This hints at ESD. Ralph is being consistent with what he believes. He is being honest. He is not pretending. He is loudly proclaiming he is not self-deceptive in nature. This describes one way of being in the world. However, Carrie represents another way. She wants to say things she does not believe. This is for the justifiable purpose of not hurting Hope's feelings, but clearly there is a hint that the same tactic can be adopted to avoid unpleasant feelings within the single consciousness. Here such unpleasant feelings are connected to the more general point of the futility indicated by inevitable and personal death.

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[73] Ibid., p. 247.

The second example is also told within the possibility of a Lodgean double function, but is even less likely to be noticed for it comes before the last example might raise awareness with respect to death. It is also indicated by having two contributions. This time they are not separated by character but by more than the designated "twenty" pages. Ralph's contribution is given early on and seems innocent. It is given as another example of his intellectual honesty. He identifies "secrecy of thought" with "the privacy of consciousness"[74] and this is presented as self evident. Helen, later, puts it differently. She turns it into something connected with intrigue and collusiveness. It - the "secret" - changes from being absolutely necessary and private to something that is necessary by choice and collusive: "we had agreed to conceal."[75] This is enough to justify looking for a covert plot. The references point to deliberate hiding and are misleading only in their direction of where to look. The affair is part of the overt plot and its associated secret is as uninteresting as the affair. But, if it is taken seriously, it serves as a distracter, for the relevant collusive hiding involves Ralph with Duggers, not with Helen. The covert plot is pointed to but hidden at the same time. This is exactly what an ESDeS demands.

(v) Collusion

Collusion comes in two broad forms. The first is explicit and relates to the bourgeois project which has already been described in the meaning section. The

[74] Ibid., p. 60.
[75] Ibid., p. 105.

narrative-consciousness as represented by all the characters defends itself from ESD awareness by adopting the middle-class form of bad faith or seriousness. It has no need of an existentially-self-deceptive process. This project is seen to be continuously on offer. Not only is this true but the reader is invited to collude by imitation: to read the right books, to see the right films, to go to the right schools and to generally conform. This is done by the intermixing of real names. Only the people who recognise them are included, are the right sort of people. In addition the point is made verbally. The reader is frequently told that the lives and actions of the characters are interesting. This may be so in fact. Raine claims, with respect to the consciousness discussions: "When you're reading *Thinks*…you're fascinated by the information. The sheer interest of it stops you raising an objection."[76] Lodge doesn't believe it though. During the conversation he clearly thinks Raine is referring to his technique of "allusion and joke". And the text doesn't believe it either. It needs to keep reminding the reader, when the interest, if it exists, should be self-evident. Early on, Ralph describes a conversation with Helen as "quite a lively conversation".[77] Helen returns the compliment when she says the Centre "proved unexpectedly interesting".[78] The reader even has to be told that life is "full of interest and deeply satisfying".[79] They are reminded right through to the end when something is supposed to be good. Helen's views on consciousness, given at the conference, are described as superficial but the reader is not allowed to leave it

[76] Lodge, "A conversation about *Thinks*", p. 296.
[77] Lodge, *Thinks*, p. 59.
[78] Ibid., p. 61.
[79] Ibid., p. 33.

like that. They are told it "was such an inspiring talk".[80] Ralph is the only character allowed to criticise. He doesn't much like the students' essays or Helen's book, but in the end he too is forced into the mould: "he was perceptibly less assertive, more subdued, more middle-aged."[81] If the reader likes the book and agrees that it is interesting, like Raine, they are likely to be middle-class. The social pressure which makes them conform in every other way will serve the existential purpose here: they will collude with the text and not discover the covert plotting. The paradoxical alternative - existential angst - must be buried.

If, however, the reader does not find the overt plotting interesting, despite the injunctions to do so, they will not collude at this level. They may then discover the covert plot. If they do they will still find themselves invited to collude, as in *Heart of Darkness*, by becoming part of the collusive death plot: the Duggers covert plot. The paradoxical alternative to life - existential angst - must be buried.

(vi) Repetition

If Douglas Douglass and Messenger, as names, are allowed their metaphorical significance then it would be foolish to overlook Reed. Helen draws attention to the problem of reading. When Ralph questions the need for "more novelists"[82] - possibly because he himself doesn't "read much contemporary fiction"[83] - Helen

80 Ibid., p. 320.
81 Ibid., p. 340.
82 Ibid., p. 47.
83 Ibid., p. 97.

notes that people need stories. She worries about it. She asks herself, but doesn't answer, several times, why there is a need for "the endless multiplication of *new* stories?"[84]

> Before the rise of the novel there wasn't the same obligation on the storyteller – you could relate the old familiar tales over and over….But for the last three centuries writers have been required to make up a new story *every time*….the plot must be fleshed out with a new set of characters, and worked out in a new set of circumstances….it seems extraordinary, even perverse, that we should bother to invent all these additional pretend-lives….the reader must register and memorize these facts in order to follow your story, but they are flushed away almost as soon as the book is finished, to make room for another story. Before long nothing remains in the reader's memory but a name or two, a few vague impressions of people, an indistinct recollection of the plot, and a general sense of having been entertained, or not, as the case may be. Should I really be encouraging these bright young people to add their quotient to the dust-heap of forgotten pseudo-lives?[85]

It is clear stories *are* told, written, listened to and read but it is not yet clear to Helen why this should be so. She thinks, at this point in time, it is not because of their plots, or because of their insights into consciousnesses, or because they entertain – although they may do all of these. However, she will, by the end of the novel, be able to see that the narrative-consciousness theory can provide a satisfactory answer: they serve a crucial existential purpose. Insofar as people are writing themselves as Ralph asserts - "We make [ourselves] up all the time. Like you make up your stories"[86] - they do so within Story-2. And then their stories do not last, by definition. They have to be replaced or repeated. *Thinks* knows this and makes a motif of the idea. Every story, within the story, has the possibility of three

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84 Ibid., p. 83.
85 Ibid., pp. 83-84.
86 Ibid., p. 99.

repetitions from apparently different points of view. And then, at the end of the novel, Helen moves on after the necessary suicide of Duggers – the separation of angst – by writing another story. This allows other Lodgean "allusion". Helen's new book borrows from Sartre's *Nausea*. Her book *Crying is a Puzzler* has already been written as *Thinks.* A reviewer of the book describes it as "so old fashioned as to be almost experimental".[87] The text is stating clearly that Eagleton's desire "to embrace our own nothingness"[88] is to be rejected in favour of continuous repetition of the individual ESDeS. To do so, however, the text has to provide the means. It has to provide a covert plot to justify ridding itself of the part of its narrative-consciousness that represents awareness of existential futility.

The Covert Plotting

Narrative-consciousness-theory is based on the idea that if existential angst is to be hidden its text as a whole requires a division into two stories: overt plotting and covert plotting. The text of *Thinks* allows for such a division as soon as it starts. It makes division an issue by its technique of oscillating between the narratives provided by Ralph and Helen. It specifies what this might mean by having Helen, in her first contribution, focus on a division of mind when she states: "It's as if I am two people at once."[89] It then, as the theory demands, makes it clear through its use of genre-markers that a covert plot exists. The theory goes on to suggest that the covert plotting will exist between death-like events. There are three deaths in this

87 Ibid., p. 340.
88 Terry Eagleton, *After Theory,* London: Penguin, 2004, p. 210.
89 Lodge, *Thinks*, p. 17.

novel. The first two deaths start the chain with the process of recognition which leads to a point of recognition. This starts the choice to avoid suicide and to create, by a process of narration, a new project ending in another death to allow the establishment of the project. The death-separation gets rid of angst into the covert plot allowing the positive part of the narrative-consciousness to be able to adopt the new project with enthusiasm.

The first two deaths provide starting points for Ralph and Helen respectively. The first death takes place in fictional time before the start of this story. It is the death of Isabel Hotchkiss. Her death is described, by Ralph, as "a full stop".[90] It manifestly isn't as far as this story is concerned: it is, for Ralph, the beginning. Reference to it, since it adds nothing to the story except by interpretation, can be deemed to be the last point of narration. A point of narration is always the start of a new cycle. The cover story begins to break down during a new process of recognition. As has been stated, the merit of this book is that it does not concern itself too much with this: it takes it as given. Craig Raine, however, has linked the start to Eros and Thanatos which, if allowed in a modified form, reinforces the claim that what is to follow is a battle between these. The second death is that of Helen's husband, Martin. Its narration is repeated three times in three nearly identical versions. The triple telling reinforces the identity of the three tellers - Helen, the narrator and Ralph - as intentional aspects of the narrative consciousness called Lodge. It does a little more than this. This repetitive telling is connected with going away. When Helen tells Ralph about her husband's death he

[90] Ibid., p. 5.

is not sympathetic. He says, "That was tough for you, but a good way to go for him."[91] Helen reacts, in all three versions, by appearing to want to leave. Martin "go[es]" but, when it comes down to it, Helen does not. A deliberate choice is taken: she stays and starts creating a new story. In the overt plot the choice is to start an affair with Ralph. In an ESDeS the possibility of going away means considering the idea of suicide: that is taking recognised angst to its logical conclusion; recognising that "life is pointless". If Helen had gone away she would not have experienced the particular process of adjustment described in this narrative. Since she stays, the process of narration starts. It is Martin's death which necessitates Helen's need for work and her presence at the university. It is also his death – reworked by the sub-plot of the student's suspected plagiarism – that allows the possibility of the relationship – in the overt plot – with Ralph.

The last death is that of Duggers. After it, Ralph and Helen, separately, are able to start a new project. The novel is not the new project. It is the self-deceptive cycle. In between the deaths is the covert plot. The covert plotting makes it clear that it is not Helen who is two people at once. The text does make it very explicit, however, that the Ralph and Duggers parts of the overall consciousness are mutually exclusive. The covert plot, here, includes making this knowledge available. Because they represent two mutually contradictory propositions, one or the other has to go. But because the process is intentional the choice of who has to go is collusive.

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[91] Ibid., p. 34.

Duggers gets so very few mentions it is worthwhile listing them. The first seven take place before the appearance of the policeman and the emergence of the child-pornography plot. The second group of seven take place after. In between there is the intrusion of what the thesis likes to call a distracting possible death.

Duggers's first scene has already been introduced. It takes place during the tour of the psychology building. The tour is described by the third-person narrator in the present tense. It is, therefore, intended to be taken as objective. The scene takes only a small section of a large chapter. In it, Duggers's name, in various versions, is mentioned nine times. This makes it a little unusual. The repetition seems, at first, to draw attention to him and would seem to argue against connecting him to the covert plot. It has, however, the opposite effect. An ESDeS text needs always to make not-p available and to hide it. The repetitive use of alternatives has the effect of minimising the force of the *particular* naming "Douglas C. Douglass". What is made available, if it is noticed, is that the double name and the double "s" serves two purposes. First, they make available the nature of consciousness required by an ESDeS. The overall story must contain two stories. Second, and much more importantly, the doubling is a clear (Lodgean) literary allusion. This has already been discussed in the context of the uneasiness genre-marker which shows that Duggers is linked to *Lolita* (1959) and paedophilia. It is, nonetheless, still possible to assert that, as a matter of fact, Duggers is not noticed. Further analysis of the context of this section shows why. The Duggers appearance is preceded and succeeded by a huge number of names, several alternative candidates for linking

and the higher profile overt plots of illicit relationships and further interest in the consciousness debate theme. To illustrate this point it might be noted that his name come up in a book which contains nearly 200 names. The tour itself introduces seventeen new names in addition to the twenty-eight previously mentioned (not including Ralph and Helen) and the 127 yet to be mentioned – a staggering 172 names in one book. Most of the names are connected to minor characters. The fact that most of these are seldom if ever mentioned again would encourage the reader not to notice minor characters. Of the few that do get a mention, including Annabel Riverdale, some seem more likely than Duggers to produce subplots and which makes the fact that he is overlooked more likely. One thing is incontrovertible: Duggers is never again referred to by his full name. His death, however, at the end of the book may make an "attentive" reader ask why this is. Obtaining an answer would necessitate a second reading which would elicit the following analysis.

Once the Duggers allusion is picked up the covert plot starts to unravel. The second substantive reference[92] starts to reveal numerous connections between Duggers and Ralph entirely separate from the overt plotting. Subsequent references are minor and build on this start. The connections can be classified into similarities and differences. Both characters are scientists. Both were applicants for the Head of Department job, both have an interest in paedophilia (loosely defined) and both have considered taking their own lives. However, as the text makes clear they are opposites in all of these things. Duggers is a real scientist whereas Ralph is just a

[92] Ibid., pp. 113-116.

"mediadong".[93] Duggers does not get the Head of Department job and Ralph does. Duggers is eventually caught downloading pornography whereas Ralph restricts his fantasies to his audio diary. They differ most significantly in that Ralph is presented as an attractive figure and Duggers as a stereotypical outsider. Typical quotes derived from this section include: "Duggers lives with his widowed mother and unmarried sister"[94] and "He is totally devoid of charm."[95]

The information is provided by Ralph's audio notes and starts with Ralph recounting how he met Duggers entering the psychology building just as he was leaving. The nature of the meeting serves to highlight the congruence of both Duggers's and Ralph's behaviour as surreptitious. On this occasion Ralph notes that Duggers "looked slightly flustered…no doubt I did too".[96] Prompted by this meeting Ralph recalls that Duggers was "the leading internal candidate" when he was applying for his job and expressed some anxiety that he might be about "to hit the headlines with a sensational new discovery".[97] The section ends with what Raine would describe as a case of intuition but the thesis sees as more significant in terms of pinning down the covert plot. Duggers's name is linked with Turing. Turing was a real – in the sense of not fictional – scientist. His intrusion can be seen simply as a technique of giving the text some realist authenticity but it can also be given more importance since he is "true" in the sense he actually happened. The three tellings in *Thinks* may in general be unreliable but the reader is warned to take

[93] Ibid., p. 25. The term "mediadong" is said to have been taken from "Private Eye". So the distinction between the real and fictional is once again blurred.
[94] Ibid., p. 113.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.
[97] Ibid., p. 114.

notice of this particular fact: Turing was a "lonely, repressed, unhappy homosexual" who "eventually kills himself".[98] If Ralph is not surprised when Duggers kills himself then it will not be because of intuition but because he had already noticed the evidence for its likelihood. The reader is then distracted by being led back to one of the main plots of the Helen "kiss", and her near nakedness through Carrie's lack of nakedness to Emily's (Ralph's step-daughter) actual nakedness. Ralph has accidently observed Emily in her bath and although the look was not long it gave him sufficient information to include a fairly erotic, albeit brief, description of her, on his stream of consciousness tape, which culminates in him saying, "I'd like to fuck Emily."[99] Not put with Jamesian elegance and not more than a dozen lines, then back to the possibility of Helen and the recall of a scene with Marianne next to the bottle bank. The key events are lost among the highlights but once looked for they give another exciting conjunction. Duggers, who may make the headlines, is contrasted with Ralph, who thinks about them all the time. Duggers, who is compared to a repressed homosexual, is compared with Ralph who has illicit thoughts with respect to his daughter. Once the connections are raised other re-readings become possible. It can be noticed that Ralph had previously recalled his first sexual encounter with an older woman, Martha. He goes into great detail and readers might feel that the literary intention of the recall is to fill out Ralph's character – that is he is obsessed with sex. But when he tells his wife she is shocked. She interprets the woman's behaviour as "sexual abuse".[100] Ralph's recollections show that he can misinterpret situations; that what he thinks is normal

[98] Ibid., p. 116.
[99] Ibid., p. 117.
[100] Ibid., p. 70.

might be regarded by others as perverse. Both Duggers and Ralph are linked to an allegation of perversity: albeit not yet of the same sort. Certainly both fantasies are self-perceived as perversities for they both keep them secret. The difference is that Duggers, due to his linking with Turing, probably feels unhappy about his "perversion" whilst Ralph appears happy about his.

The third and last significant amount of space[101] allocated to Duggers comes in the narrator's report of Ralph's fiftieth birthday party. It is spread over several pages but only as tiny inserts. It adds to Duggers's image as an unattractive *outsider*. He arrives first. It is necessary to delegate Helen to talk to him. He is shown to eat unattractively: "He nibbles [a macadamia nut] with a rapid movement of his front teeth, like a squirrel."[102] His talk with Helen relates to science and Helen talks nonsense about it and so annoys him. He then disappears whilst the insider people have insider conversations about politics, books and relationships. He reappears just to go home and the text takes a penultimate opportunity, in this section, to make him look silly. He doesn't smile, "he exposes his teeth in a smile".[103] Finally, his outsider status is established as it begun. Ralph dismisses him with "always the first to arrive and the first to go".[104]

The first three examples are introduced 54 pages into the novel and are completed within a further 72 pages. There are only a further four, tiny,

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101 Ibid., pp. 126–132.
102 Ibid., p. 127.
103 Ibid., p. 135.
104 Ibid., p. 137.

references[105] before the child pornography plot starts to emerge into the overt scene 162 pages later: significantly more than needed to exclude, by Lodge's definition, even the very "attentive" reader. In short any recall with reference to Duggers has faded before the significant event. These additional references only add to his image as a person who is unattractive in comparison to Ralph. The narrator notes that he is the lucky winner of the duck-race competition but is not there to collect his prize. He is described, by Ralph, as "a reclusive buggar".[106] Ralph, in return, is described by him, through Helen, as a "master of the scientific soundbite".[107] This observation clearly rankles with Ralph since he re-visits the exchange in his diary.[108] Duggers get a further tiny mention as one of the exclusive group of people who call Ralph "Messenger". He does so not because he is a close friend but because he is a "very formal colleague".[109] The final reference, prior to the arrival of the police, has him, once again, dismissed as not important. This time he is described as a deputy (to Ralph) who does not have "social organisation [as] his forte".[110]

Duggers and Ralph, then, are opposing parts of the narrative consciousness. They are opposites in one more, very significant, way: death. This idea has been introduced as a genre-marker and covert plot instigator but now gets full rein within the important overt plot: Ralph becomes concerned that he will die. This possible death is in the overt plot and is called, therefore, a distracting death in the same way

105 Ibid., pp. 240, 251, 255 and 272.
106 Ibid., p. 240.
107 Ibid., p. 241.
108 Ibid., p. 250.
109 Ibid., p. 255.
110 Ibid., p. 272.

that all overt plots are seen, by this thesis, to be distracters. The novel actually picks up momentum towards the end as Ralph seems to become more and more embroiled in the consequences of his lifestyle There is a sense in which the novel has been leading up to his downfall for his charm wears thin and he begins to emerge as a pretty obnoxious character. The first indication of the distracting death appears, as a hint, as he starts to complain about not feeling well on his visit to Prague. He eventually goes to see his GP and asks, "could it be cancer?"[111] The answer is an implied "yes". Ralph's response to this is consistently pragmatic: "As soon as I'm quite sure I have an irreversible terminal condition I shall make for the Exit while I'm still able to walk out unassisted."[112] It is, in context, added to a growing list of problems that have slowly emerged as the novel has progressed: Donaldson's honorary degree, trouble with the MoD, Ludmilla's research grant, the possibility of exposure with respect to Marianne, the possibility of exposure with respect to Helen and the imminence of the consciousness conference (con-con). Once again it is not surprising that the reader overlooks poor Douglas. When the policeman turns up suggesting somebody in the Centre is downloading child pornography the reader simply adds this on to Ralph's list. After all, the reader knows he was sexually attracted to Emily. Ralph is about to get his come-uppance in one way or another. The text becomes even more dominated by him and the possibility of his death seems to become the natural outcome. It has been shown, empirically, that real readers never give a thought to Duggers. To emphasise the gap, the possible death

111 Ibid., p. 270.
112 Ibid., p. 282.

story runs and runs. Ralph has tests, abandons the NHS consultant and visits a private consultant. He is promised the results soon.

There are three tiny mentions of Duggers in the second group of preparatory remarks. The first is in Ralph's diary.[113] Ralph considers that he is complicit in his possible downfall by disclosing ongoing talks with the MoD. This turns out to be not true, as Ralph admits later.[114] Then, at the con-con, Helen records and reiterates the opposition between Ralph and Duggers. Ralph is described as "in sparkling form", whereas when Helen mentions Duggers's success in the duck race competition she gives him, once again, the chance to spell-out how uninteresting he is: "The prize was a case of champagne and I don't drink."[115] Finally, Duggers is seen as in a backwater "at work on his algorithms" whilst Helen and Ralph are immersed in their own, more interesting, concerns: Helen is in need of a kiss and Ralph's mind was "on something else".[116]

The fourth textual reference, in this second cluster, is the most significant element for an ESDeS reading after the double name episode. The double name episode establishes Duggers and pornography as the covert link with Ralph. This episode overtly describes his first connection with the crime and covertly justifies the claim that Ralph and Duggers are antipathetic parts of one consciousness because Ralph has known about Duggers all along without objective evidence. He

113 See ibid., pp. 296, 307, 311.
114 Ibid., p. 329.
115 Ibid., p. 308.
116 Ibid., p. 311.

has privileged access. Further, the fact that he has known and has done nothing about it says Duggers's death is, like Kurtz's, murder or at the very least collusive suicide. The conversation is between Ralph and the police office and the episode is quoted in full:

> "I've got a name for you."
> "Who is it?"
> "Professor Douglass."
> "Are you sure?"
> "About seventy per cent sure."
> "I see," says Ralph.
> "You don't seem very surprised," says DS Agnew.
> "No, well, it's strange, but the other day it suddenly occurred to me that it might be him."[117]

Why should he think this? Earlier, when other colleagues had been put in the frame he strenuously defends them. He says, "Jim Bellows, but I'm sure he's not involved."[118] And when asked whether Stuart Phillips is "trustworthy", he answers, "Completely."[119] The claim bears only two explanations. One is a spiritual interpretation: intuition. Craig Raine thinks that this theme is central to *Thinks.* He cites two examples: Ralph's potency fails before he knows he is threatened and Carrie knows the surgeon is incompetent without evidence. But again Lodge will have none of Raine's mystification. He says the evidence exists but it is not spelt-out. Raine sums up for him by saying, "it's rational. It's based on evidence. It's not mystical" and Lodge agrees, "Yeah."[120] So if evidence exists, somewhere, he is just like Marlow. He *knew* when he compared Duggers to Turing. He *knew* "the other day". Yet despite knowing, he did nothing to help Duggers before the

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117 Ibid., p. 322.
118 Ibid., p. 289
119 Ibid., p. 290.
120 Lodge, "A conversation about *Thinks*", p. 289.

problem arose and he did nothing to help him after it arose. He did not even warn him as a matter of decency. It might even be said that he colludes with the police to ensure Duggers's downfall. He gives him no chance to control his reaction so that it will not "tell…what I [DS Agnew] want to know". He even points out to the police that Duggers has "more than one" hard disk and "he may be in his office now".[121]

The fourth mention of Douglas, in the group of seven, is the suicide section. Every reference within it deserves particular attention as in a crime scene. Ralph continues to actively assist the police. He calls for Douglas to come to his office. The office is deserted but Douglas is still available. Ralph explains the situation but, again, does nothing to prepare Douglas or to assist him. In fact he puts him off his guard. He says only that the police think "somebody" is downloading child pornography and says, only, "as Deputy Director of the Centre, you would wish to be informed".[122] Duggers is asked if the police can look at his hard disc. Ralph again colludes: "It's only a formality."[123] Then Ralph hears the "Good news":[124] that his condition is not serious – *he* is not going to die. The distracting death evaporates. Meanwhile, the detective takes Douglas off. Ralph spreads his good news to Carrie and to Helen. While he is doing this "Detective Sergeant Agnew bursts abruptly into the room":

> "You'd better come, sir" he says, "It's Professor Douglass."
> "What about him?"
> "I'm afraid *he*'s dead, sir."[125]

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121 Lodge, *Thinks*, p. 322.
122 Ibid., p. 323,
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid., p. 324.
125 Ibid., p. 325. My emphasis.

The text does not leave the next bit to chance in its penultimate references to Duggers. It spells out the significant remarks. Ralph muses over the death and records:

- "Everyone is in a state of shock … except me."[126]
- "He must have had a plan … like me."[127]
- "In a way I almost feel as if he died instead of me."[128]
- "It was as if we were balanced on a pair of scales."[129]

It could not be clearer. Ralph reiterates his privileged knowledge. He has been expecting the death. He acknowledges that suicide was an option for both of them. He spells-out that it was either Duggers or him: that is it was either not-p or p. Having arranged the logically essential - the death of the outsider, the representative of existential angst - the narrative-consciousness can forget not-p. Ralph reports that "Duggers' unoccupied seat at dinner didn't attract much attention".[130] Part of the reason for this is that Ralph, in particular, did not mention him. He explains this by saying, "I couldn't think of any form of words that wouldn't sound like a sick joke to myself, to Carrie, and eventually, when the truth came out, to everybody else. So I simply made no reference to him in my speech."[131] He, in fact, chooses to not-spell-it-out.

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126 Ibid., p. 326.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid., p. 327.
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid., p. 328.
131 Ibid.

The paradoxical not-p is consigned to the covert part of the consciousness with the last reference to Duggers. Helen sums him up by saying, "Douglass's suicide…had everything to do with my decision [to carry on]."[132] It becomes possible and necessary for the overt part of the consciousness to aspire to some sort of enthusiasm for new projects.

This moving on, however, can take two forms. Ralph and Carrie choose the serious route. Helen chooses the unserious route.

Ralph and Carrie adopt the bourgeois norm. There is a certain irony in this for they were presented at the beginning of the book as rebels but this turns out to be just their way of writing their cover story. During the book they are pretentious. Beyond the book: "Carrie did not finish her novel…she took up sculpture…and opened a small gallery" and "Ralph published his book *Machine Living*…and was awarded a CBE."[133]

Helen, via a final literary allusion, adopts ESDeS. There were early hints that she was prepared to abandon bourgeois complacency for in her book, *The Eye of the Storm*, her then felt despair is removed by the bondage sex scene. There are further hints in her attitude to the *insiders* at the "Richmond's dinner party"[134] and at Ralph's fiftieth birthday party despite her behaviour towards Duggers. And, of course, there is Lodge's revelation that Helen represents his point of view. But

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132 Ibid., p. 331.
133 Ibid., p. 340.
134 Ibid., p. 21.

these are just hints. Her attitude now becomes more available. There is a certain self-reflective modernist irony about how she does this for it has been suggested, throughout this thesis, that writers resolve their real-life points of recognition by writing their way out of it. James and Conrad certainly did. For Helen, her new project is also a new novel. The narrative-consciousness must have been reminded of Sartre who makes it plain he is his character Roquentin - "I *was* Roquentin"[135] - and Roquentin has already written the novel *Nausea* by the time he suggests to the reader that he might do so. Here the narrative-consciousness of which Helen is an acknowledged part has already written "her" novel as *Thinks* although she calls it *Crying is a Puzzler*.[136] In so doing she is able to abandon existential angst for a time but, as she would be the first to acknowledge, it will be "required to make up a new story". She has answered her own question at last. Perhaps she should not "be encouraging" others but she has no choice but to do so herself: for her, there will have to be another story.

135 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Words*, London: Penguin, 1964, p.156.
136 Ibid., p. 340.

Conclusion

Chapter 1 of this thesis argued that, there is no such thing as a "we", the thesis should drop the use of personal pronouns and, instead, adopt the passive voice. However since his conclusion clearly emerges from a particular narrative-consciousness, it now seems appropriate to revert to the use of "I" which in turn legitimises, I believe, a personal observation. It seems to be the case that science writing is generally different from the more discursive writing adopted within the arts. It is the practice in science to start with a discrepancy and then to follow the evidence, step by step to a conclusion. In more discursive writing it is usual to reverse this procedure: that is to state the argument and only then to justify it. The argument that makes up this thesis is, in this sense, sandwiched between two conclusions for my thesis falls someway between the two forms of exposition. I introduced the thesis by making the claim that there is an outstanding problem of how to explain the empirical observation that storytelling is a ubiquitous activity. I then note that various commentators have described this by word substitution that suggests an evolutionary origin. In the introduction I attempted to signpost what this meant for literary theory. This involved the description of the consciousness as a narrative-consciousness which writes a story of the self.[1] I gave the story the name ESDeS and stated that the purpose of the story is to accommodate awareness of existential angst[2] by dividing the story into two parts: an overt plot and a covert

[1] The concept self, it will be recalled, carries no implications beyond the claim that it is the conscious correlate for the biological concept of the organism.

[2] It will be remembered that this thesis adopts Haight's propositional terminology to avoid repetition: "not worth living" becomes "not-p" and "worth living" becomes p.

plot had evolved to accommodate awareness of existential futility. Inevitably the attempt at signposting is incomplete: a complete exposition is necessarily complex and it is not possible to present the complexities until they have meaning and the meanings could not be explained without the evidence that made them necessary.

A summary of the overall conclusions therefore seems more than usually necessary. This summary is structured around a series of four questions implied and stated provided by Joseph Carroll's review essay "Universals in Literary Study" in his recent book *Literary Darwinism*.[3] In the essay Carroll points out that the idea of universals has a long philosophic tradition, from at least Aristotle, but that in its naturalistic form it is nothing more than a name for "a common human nature".[4] He points out that "naturalism is the only orientation in which theorists are actively developing the theory of literary universals" and that, since the late eighteenth century, it has been challenged by "philosophic particularism and historicism".[5] Clearly the idea of a common human nature exhibited by ubiquitous attributes called drives or instincts and expressed in particular behaviours such as storytelling was expressed before Darwin, but the idea is continuous up to Darwin. After Darwin, however the idea takes on a new expository form. Evolutionary thinkers in the human sciences "have reaffirmed the elementary Darwinian idea that human beings, like all other animals, have evolved through an adaptive process and that consequently they display an innate species-typical structure of cognitive and

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[3] Joseph Carroll, *Literary Darwinism: Evolution, Human Nature and Literature,* London: Routledge, 2004.
[4] Ibid., p. 117.
[5] Ibid.

behavioral characteristics".[6] Carroll agrees that this formulation adds nothing other than to reassert the view "that there is such a thing as human nature".[7] In this respect his summary starts at the same point as my introduction. He, however, structures his review around his framework of questions and I find this structure convenient to adopt to give the conclusion an air of freshness. I have, however, rearranged his questions to fit in with the structure I have already adopted in the main text:

- What precisely is this species-typical or universal structure?
- What bearing does it have on literary representation?
- What is the relationship between universals and particulars?
- What is the relation of literary universals to cultural difference and to historical periods?

The first answer suggests that Carroll's "species-typical or universal structure" underlying literary representation is a narrative-consciousness: that is, the so-called self represented by consciousness is nothing more than a story. The strong version of this theory asserts that the story could have a causal link to behaviour. The weak version of this theory regards the story as a mere epiphenomenon. The self may, as Carroll suggests, provide the means for organisation but it need not be for "the organization of behaviour in goal-directed ways".[8] It might be only to make sense of behaviour which will take place regardless of the content of the story.

If the strong theory is acceptable then it would suggest that when consciousness evolved and it was necessarily accompanied by the recognition of

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6 Ibid., p. 124.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., p. 128.

angst (not-p: there is no purpose to life other than propagation) then it would follow that organisms which also had the ability to self-deceive (that is to hide this awareness) would differentially survive to propagate.

In the weak theory, which does not see a causal link between the story in the consciousness and behaviour, the story serves a less dramatic function. The organism will survive because of its Darwinian imperative but the story will not make sense unless it also incorporates self-deception to hide not-p. Successful hiding will lead to a feeling of psychological well-being. Failure to hide will lead to the reverse of psychological well-being.

The answer to Carroll's second question follows automatically. The function of the story, that is the self or is told by the self, is to separate p from not-p. The means of separation constitutes the main bulk and motivation of the thesis. The thesis progressed through the examination of self-deception literature and several literary texts produced in the period starting in the mid nineteenth century. These examinations uncovered many complexities: genre-markings for unease associated with self-deception; additional genre-markers for meaning and hiding; the covert plot; the nature of the covert plot; the fact that the covert plot is to be found between two bracketing deaths; at the closing death two characters within the overall narrative-consciousness will separate; at the closing death one character will leave and one will survive; the leaving character represents not-p; the surviving character represents p; the remainder of the narrative will indicate that p is represented by the

installation of a new cover story or project. The new project is, in effect, the content of the overt plot which can be literally anything: plot or character or experimental "flow of consciousness". However, the anything turned out to not quite mean anything in the sense that it could take one of two forms: serious or unserious. Or, to put this another way, the character that survives has two possibilities: the project can be permanent or serious or the project is recognised as temporary. It is only in the unserious version that the self exists as an ESDeS.

Again this conclusion leads directly to an answer to Carroll's third question. In his essay he suggests that the consensus view is that the idea of literary universals "sets itself in opposition to the idea of literary particulars".[9] In a sense this is true but it reiterates the arguments made in my comparison between ESDeS and the modernist novel: such an opposition would be a superficial view. From an adaptationist's point of view they are both essential because one cannot exist without the other. The thesis suggests that the successful hiding of the covert plot is primarily made possible by foregrounding p at the expense of not-p:[10] the more interesting the content of the overt the less likely further plotting will be sought. Rephrased to more identically accommodate the wording used by Carroll, the division allows for the natural separation of what is necessary – the universal – from what is optional – the individual. It is true that particularism is the belief that every

[9] Ibid., p. 120.

[10] There are other mechanisms including linear narrative, obfuscation, multiple narrators, delayed decoding and, no doubt, others will be continuously invented. These are however all secondary to the main mechanism.

moment of perception is unique and irreducible[11] but in the adaptationist framework these perceptions only become possible if the organism survives to have them. In this sense the covert plotting is a prior necessity. It comes before the overt plotting. I repeat, the covert plotting would not be sustainable without successful overt plotting.

Finally, to get at Carroll's fourth and last question it is necessary to recall, as argued in the introduction, that movement to literary representation is made possible by assuming that the machine that generates the self will also generate stories in the same mould: a postulate that Carroll acknowledges is adopted by all literary Darwinians: "literary texts are themselves organized in close correspondence with the elementary structures of the adapted mind."[12] The literary text produced is then called an existentially-self-deceptive-novel or ESDeN. It should have a mechanism that is capable of hiding but even this turns out to involve more complexity: the structure of the storytelling seems to have been modified through time with the true ESDeN existing only as the mid-term in a series of three. This development implies a contribution from the universal's other challenger, historicism: which is the belief that literary expression can be radically modified by cultural context. However, whatever forms the story written by a narrative-consciousness takes, it is secondary to its motivation. What is important is that the story mechanism, however it is transmitted, saves the organism from angst in each case.

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[11] In this sense the "individual" – the term used by the thesis – is a collection of particulars so the words can, in the context of this thesis, be used interchangeably.

[12] Carroll, *Literary Darwinism,* p. 125.

The first form, Story-1, takes place in an environment where everybody believes the same thing: that there is a reason to life and it is either given or will be given by a transcendental mechanism. In this form the story did not have a covert plot but followed the process of self-deception within an overt plot. The thesis, like Dawkins, rejects this but acknowledges that the rejection is not universal. Some people choose to retain this view. However, the thesis goes on to suggest that, along with the modernist novel, the ESDeN has emerged with environmental changes that took place from the middle of the nineteenth century. There is no sharp division between the Story-1 method of storytelling and the ESDeN method or Story-2. The process of self-deception technique used to express Story-1 lingers on in, for example, *Heart of Darkness* giving substance to the view that modernism embodies experimentalism with a lingering desire for the past: in the new phase the narrative-consciousness of both writers and readers would like there to be an external source of reason but accepts that there is none. Under the new circumstances, the narrative-consciousness has no choice but to create a new type of story structure which both recognises the existence of existential futility and contrives to forget, or hide, this knowledge. The new expression exhibited by the narrative-consciousness can then be replicated in selected generated external storytelling, such as *Heart of Darkness, Chance* and *Thinks,* by having a covert plot/overt plot division. The thesis considers the possibility that there is a third way. This assumes, in theory, that a cover story is not necessary. This could, in theory, be the form particularism takes after Darwin: "Philosophic particularism enters into the closely related movements…and through these movements it had a major impact on modernist

literature".[13] However, this thesis does not find any real substantive evidence for it. Even the most post-modern works seem to contain projects: indeed they may be said embody a project. There may be a post-modern person but there cannot be, by definition a sequel to a post-modern novel.

Perhaps Coleridge's most famous aphorism is his advocacy of a "willing suspension of disbelief" which purports to explain how "characters supernatural, or at least romantic"[14] can gain "human interest" by "supposing them real".[15] It provides the backdrop for, perhaps, the thesis's second most important lesson: whilst Coleridge is right about the overt plotting, he is exactly wrong with respect to the covert plotting. To enjoy the overt story it may be necessary to believe that the characters are people who could exist even if one knows they do not but to get to this point it is necessary to drop the awareness of existential angst and to substitute "a belief" that the subsequent suspension of disbelief is worthwhile.

The most enduring lesson and, perhaps, the most important one is that the narrative-consciousnesses of both writers and readers can be certain that another story will soon become necessary. Telling, writing, listening to and reading stories are ubiquitous human activities for a reason

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13 Ibid., p. 117.
14 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, London: J. M. Dent, 1956, p. 169.
15 Ibid., p. 168.

Glossary of technical terms

Each term is indicated by bold type in the main text on the first relevant occasion it is used.

Available — actually present in the **narrative-consciousness** or the text that mirrors narrative-consciousness. The presence overcomes the problem perceived by self-deception theorists who do not think that it is possible for **p** and **not-p** to be present at the same time in a conventional consciousness.

Bracketing deaths — the two events which mark the beginning (the breakdown of the **pre-existing cover story**) and the end (the **choice**) of the **process of recognition.** They appear to be, on most occasions, deaths but this is not essential. They can be absences of any sort.

Carnal plot — synonym for **manifest** plot.

Choice — represents the selection of **Story** by the **narrative-consciousness**. It, in theory, could be suicide but in practice is either a reversal to **Story-1** (via the **parent-child mechanism** or by adopting **seriousness**), a **Story-2** (by adopting **unseriousness** of **ESDeS**) or, possibly a **Story-3**. It takes place in principle at the **point of recognition** and is completed by the **point of narration**.

Collusive death plot — indicates that all characters within the **covert plotting** agree as to the character chosen to die. This is taken by the **narrative-consciousness** theory to mean that the act is **intentional**.

Collusion/collusive — indicates that both sides of the **p**, **not-p** divide within the **narrative-consciousness** agree as to the **choice**.

Cover story — the stable state in which **not-p** is successfully being **hidden** and **p** is successfully in operation. See **pre-existing cover story** and **project**.

Covert plotting — a specific type of plotting that is available but disguised due to the ingenuity of the originating **narrative-consciousness** (the author). It is to be distinguished from **latent plots** which require the active invention of the reader.

Distracters — anything that draws attention away from the **covert plotting**. The most likely **distracters** are successful **overt plots** and good **interpretations** of the overt plot. However, there are many others including the triviality of the overt plot and large numbers of alternative minor characters.

Existential-self-deception (ESD) — deception motivated by a need to escape the awareness of existential self-futility.

Existentially-self-deceptive-narrative-consciousness theory — the theory that claims that the self is no more than a machine which has evolved a **narrative-consciousness**.

Existentially-self-Deceptive-novel (ESDeN) — a written work that uses the same techniques as **ESDeS**.

Existentially-self-deceptive-story (ESDeS) — see **existentially-self-deceptive-storytelling**.

Existentially-self-Deceptive-storyteller (ESDeS) — see **existentially-self-deceptive-storytelling**.

Existentially-self-Deceptive-storytelling (ESDeS) — a story designed to facilitate the **hiding** of existential futility. The acronym also stands for story and for storyteller.

Existentially-self-deceptive-unease — a **genre marker** that links the marker for unease specifically to self-deception and to meaning.

Failure of ESD — at a **point of narration** the **narrative-consciousness** has choices. One of these is to self-deceive with respect to existential futility. This is given the name bad faith by existentialist theory but changed to **serious** or the **failure of ESD** by the **narrative-consciousness theory.**

First-Story — a convenient starting point. It will embrace the existential story in its species-wide form. It will take the form of the **self-deceptive process**: that is it will not contain a **covert plot**.

Forget/forgotten synonym for hide/hidden

Genre markers markers to indicate that the story should be interpreted as an **ESDeS**.

Hide/hiding/ hidden the process which accommodates ESD or **not-p**. It is also the name for a specific **genre marker** that marks the presence of **covert plotting.**

Individual relates to the **overt plotting** and refers to the idea that any story will do provided that it serves as a **distracter**. It is used, within this thesis, as the polar term to **universal**. It clearly has a connection to the idea, used within the theory of the Enlightenment and the modernist novel, that the individual way of being in the world takes precedence over the collective way of being in the world.

Intentional this is not used in the usual anthropomorphic way. It indicates either a property of the text within an ESDeS that enables the **covert plotting** to be predicted or, more specifically, the covert plotting will consist of a **collusive death plot**.

Interpretation a reading of the **overt** or **manifest** plot that relies on information not specifically given in the text. This is the main means of distracting from the **covert plotting**.

Latent plot an alternate name for an **interpreted plot.** It is not a covert plot.

Manifest plot an alternative name for **overt** plot.

Meaning/absurdity an alternate name for existential futility. It is also the name give to a specific **genre marker** to indicate the presence of **covert plotting.**

Narrative-consciousness the part of the human machine that creates the story to hide awareness of existential futility. It will contain several aspects personified as characters. One or more characters will represent existential futility (**not-p**) and one or more characters will represent putative projects (**p**). At the **point of narration** one or other of these will die.

Not-p a short-hand, logic, symbol indicating a proposition. In this text it carries the specific meaning: “life is not worth living”.

Not-spelling-out an alternate name for **hiding**.

Overt plotting a specific type of plotting that is available along side the **covert plotting** but, in contrast to covert plotting, it should be foregrounded because its **prior** function is to disguise the covert plotting.

p: a short-hand, logic symbol indicating a proposition. In this text it carries the specific meaning: "life is worth living". When it takes on specific means of showing that life is worth living it can be called a **project**.

Parent-child process is almost a synonym for the **self-deceptive process**. It differs only in its motivation. The parent-child process follows a **point of recognition** whereas the self-deceptive process need not.

Point of narration the point of the narrative where the character representing existential angst (**p**) is hidden away and the characters representing the possibility of a new **project** (p) are foregrounded. It can almost coincide with the **point of narration** where the **process of narration** is stated or implied but **not-spelled-out**.

Point of recognition the culmination of the **process of recognition**. The **narrative-consciousness** can do longer escape the awareness of existential futility.

Pre-existing cover story **the cover story** that is present at the beginning of an **ESDeS** or a new **repetition**. Clearly the repetition ends with a new cover story which becomes the pre-existing cover story for the next narrative.

Prior the idea that one process necessarily precedes another.

Process of narration this is seldom included in the **overt plotting** even if one of its **interpretations** is the **self-deceptive-process**. It is the structural division of the overall **narrative-consciousness** into two parts: the **overt plotting** and the **covert plotting.**

Process of recognition the part of the narrative which shows the **pre-existing cover story** breaking down. It is characterised by the exhibition of the four self-deceptive behaviours: rejecting contrary evidence, substituting supporting evidence, post-hoc recognition and the **point of recognition.**

Project the specific manifestation of **p** and an alternative name for **cover story**. It carries intimations of temporariness.

Repetition an **ESDeS** is temporary and has to be repeated as soon as futility re-enters the **narrative-consciousness**. It can also be a **genre marker** for the presence the ESDeS.

Secret a name given to indicate the likely presence of **covert plot**. It is generally an unfulfilled promise.

Self-deceptive process the collective name for the series of steps: **cover story→process of recognition→point of recognition→process of narration→point of narration→new cover story**.

Self-deceptive unease a **genre-marker** that links the marker for unease specifically to self-deception.

Serious an alternate name for bad faith or reversion to **Story-1**. It means a **choice** has been taken to reject freedom of choice. This will take the form of adopting a permanent role which has a functional similarity to accepting an external metanarrative, such as God. It carries attitudinal connotations: the way to be in the world as opposed to the specific manifestation of a particular Story-1.

Spelling-out the opposite to **hiding**.

Spiritual plot an alternate name for an **interpreted or latent** plot. It is not a **covert plot**.

Split/splitting the separation of **p** from **not-p** at the poi**nt of narration**. The **choice** is a decision (near the **point of recognition**) which is actualised by the **split**.

Story-1 the existential story in its species-wide form. It will take the form of the **self-deceptive process**: that is, it will not contain a **covert plot**.

Story-2 this is an alternate name for **ESDeS**. That is, it contains, necessarily, a **covert plot**. If it also contains the **self-deceptive process** this will be relegated to **genre-marking** status and indicates a reluctance to move on from **Story-1**.

Story-3 this is a hypothesised form of story which may be a progression from ESDeS. If it exists it will neither contain a **covert plot** nor a **self-deceptive process.**

Survive/survival to avoid awareness of existential futility.

Unease/uneasiness the initial **genre marker** that indicates the possibility of an **ESDeS**. When it is combined successively with a **self-deception marker** and a **meaning marker** the possibility becomes a certainty.

Universal it is used, within this thesis, as the polar term to individual. it relates to the covert plotting and refers to the idea that there is a necessary prior step before the individual

Unserious an alternate name for **ESDeS** or **Story-2**. It carries attitudinal connotations: the way to be in the world as opposed to the specific manifestation of a particular ESDeS or Story-2.

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